

The
CROOKED
CROSS

CHARLES
J.
DUTTON



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THE CROOKED CROSS

By CHARLES J. DUTTON

THE UNDERWOOD MYSTERY

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

THE SHADOW ON THE GLASS

THE HOUSE BY THE ROAD

THE SECOND BULLET

The
CROOKED CROSS

BY
CHARLES J. DUTTON



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TO MY WIFE

LAURA

WHO GAVE ME THE IDEA WHICH
UNDERLIES THIS PLOT

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I AN INVITATION TO DINNER	I
II THE CROOKED CROSS	14
III THE BROKEN BOOKCASE	23
IV WE DISCUSS THE CRIME	35
V THE INQUEST	49
VI I HAVE AN ADVENTURE	63
VII THE CHIEF AND I—MAKE A CALL	79
VIII WE HAVE A VISITOR—AND—I TAKE A RIDE	93
IX IN WHICH BARTLEY ARRIVES	107
X THE FACE AT THE WINDOW	119
XI THE GARDENER SPEAKS	135
XII THE CHINAMAN REAPPEARS	148
XIII WE HEAR A STORY—AND—DISCOVER IT IS TRUE	165
XIV PATTON TELEPHONES—"IT'S MURDER"	177
XV ANOTHER MURDER	191
XVI THE VOICE IN THE DARK	208
XVII THE CASE IS ENDED	228

THE CROOKED CROSS



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CHAPTER I

AN INVITATION TO DINNER

As a rule the first of June always found Bartley out of the city. With the coming of the first days of spring, he would begin to grow restless. One would find upon the large rosewood desk in his library various fishing flies, and maps showing far-off lakes and streams. For a while he would even drop his books and pamphlets which told of the 18th century of France, and pore over various guides of the woods and mountains; and then when June arrived, we would take the big car and go wandering forth in search of rest.

But the first of June had come and gone, and it was now the middle of the month. What was worse, there did not seem to be the slightest chance that we could get away for many weeks to come. Down in the Court House a sensational murder trial was slowly dragging itself out to a conclusion—a conclusion not yet in sight. It was this trial which was keeping us in the city, for Bartley's testimony was the hope upon which the defense leaned for an acquittal.

The stay in the city might have been endured if it had not been for the weather. For over a week we had sweltered under the warmest heat spell of many a year. Each morning I rose with but one thought in my mind—that there would be a breeze. But every

day the thermometer went a few degrees higher than the day before—while each evening the list of those overcome by the heat grew larger. Bartley, far more of a philosopher than myself, at my constant complaint that it was warm, suggested that I follow the example of Trouble, our Airedale, who retired each morning to the cellar to spend the day.

One evening toward the end of the third week in June I entered Bartley's house in Gramercy Square long after our usual dinner hour. Going to the dining room, I found that Bartley had eaten several hours before. Rance, our old colored man, served me with the air of one who felt insulted over the fact my delay had caused his well-cooked dinner to grow cold. It was not until I was drinking my coffee that he unbent so far as to inform me that Bartley wished to see me in the library.

Bartley's library had once been called the most distinctive room in the city. When he had remodeled the house, he had torn away all the partitions to make one huge room. It ran across the entire front of the house, and had one of the largest fireplaces I have ever seen. The walls were covered with French prints—not copies, but the rare originals of the eighteenth century. Boucher, Fragonard, and their contemporaries covered three of the walls, while the fourth was left for the Belgian—Rops—whose devilish suggestiveness leered at one in over sixty etchings.

Below the etchings ran the bookcases, filled with the books which Bartley loved; not ordinary books, but the rare things upon crime and science, philosophy and

psychology—the cream of a lifetime of collecting. And then came the long rows of thin volumes, with their dark red covers—the most extensive collection in the country, of the rare pamphlets and memoirs of the years before the French Revolution.

Bartley was seated by his large rosewood desk, whose surface was covered with books and papers. He even looked cool in his white silk suit, and he smiled when I mentioned the heat. With that he went back to the book he was reading, while I picked up the evening paper and went over to an easy chair. There was nothing of importance in the paper, though the murder trial filled many columns—columns of the usual sob stuff, but with little information. In disgust, I threw the paper aside just as Bartley spoke.

“Pelt,” he said, “I received a letter this morning from Carter. He is very eager to have us come up and visit him.”

I was rather surprised at this, for I had thought Carter was on the other side of the water. Seeing my astonishment, Bartley continued:

“George writes me that his chief has given him the summer to rest in. He is at the old home, and wants us to spend part of the summer with him.”

Carter’s father had made a fortune out of some so-called cure for rheumatism. It is much to be doubted if it ever cured any one, but it did result in George receiving a large sum of money when his father died. But money meant little to Carter, while adventure promised a great deal more. In some manner, Carter got into the Secret Service, where he surprised those

who looked upon him as being only a rich man's son, by becoming the best man his chief had. Though there was at least fifteen years of difference in their ages, Bartley and he were the warmest of friends. I was thinking of this as Bartley's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"I have been thinking, Pelt, that there is not the slightest reason in the world for your staying in the city. I can not get away until after I have testified in the trial; and the way it looks now, only the Lord Himself knows when that will be. But it is absurd for you to stay in the city while it is so warm. Why don't you take the small car and the dog and go to Carter's? I will come as soon as I can."

Carter's home was in what has often been called the most beautiful village in the state of New York. It lay under the shadow of a range of hills, with a lake at the front door. And the lawn of Carter's house fronted the lake. But though the suggestion appealed to me, still I did not like the idea of leaving Bartley alone in the city; I said as much, only to have him retort:

"That's foolish, Pelt. Your hanging around here can do no good. And there is another reason why I want you to go up. Carter writes me that James Ranville is his guest; and I want you to meet him."

Seeing my blank look, he enlightened me. Ranville, it seemed, was an inspector from Scotland Yard who was visiting in America. During the war he and Carter had worked together on several cases, and he had crossed the ocean to visit his friend. Bartley informed me that Ranville was one of the best men Scotland

Yard had, and urged strongly that I follow his suggestion and run up to Carter's. And so, though I protested rather keenly that I did not wish to run away, at last I agreed to go the next morning; and when I said this, he returned to his book.

Four o'clock the next afternoon found me driving down the wide, tree-lined street of Carter's town. It had been an easy drive across the central part of the state, though Trouble, the Airedale, protested several times that he thought we had driven far enough. The last seventy-five miles—miles which led through peaceful valleys and along the side of shady mountains—had passed quickly. Though it was warm, yet from the hills had come a slight breeze, and the air was heavy with the scent of the fields and woods.

As I drove slowly down the main street, I could see that the village was a wealthy one, and quite a summer place. White, colonial houses in the midst of wide lawns were set far back from the street. The streets were lined with huge elm trees, whose branches met in a green arch above my head. The cars that I passed were expensive ones, and the few people I saw looked as though they not only had plenty of leisure, but all the money they could use.

Carter's place was down by the lake, and the directions which Bartley had given me were so complete that I had no trouble in finding it. A green hedge hid the lawn from the street, and large trees shaded the house—a house whose red-shingled top I could see ahead of me. I turned in the drive which ran between two rows of roses—roses red as flame in the summer

sun—and stopped the car in front of the house. It fronted a lawn which ended at the lake. As the car stopped, a man ran down the steps to greet me; it was Carter.

Any one who saw him would have decided that he had never done a stroke of work in his life. His silk suit was of wonderful texture. The fit was that which only the most expensive tailor can give, and the tie which floated in the breeze was very far from being sedate. His whole appearance was that of a young man who found life very good, and the task of spending his money rather easy. The blond hair was closely cut, and the little mustache gave him rather an affected look. No one seeing Carter for the first time would have guessed his reputation in the Secret Service.

He greeted me with evident pleasure and then asked in surprise where Bartley might be, expressing his regrets when I told him why I had come alone. Then, telling me to leave my things in the car and that his man would take them to my room, he whistled to the dog and we went to the veranda. It ran across the front of the house—a veranda with easy chairs and bright porch hammocks. Here he proposed that I rest until he had brought me out a drink, and with that he went into the house.

For a while I studied the view before me. A few yards away the green grass of the lawn ended at the waters of the lake. It was not a small lake, and I judged it must be several miles to the other shore. Far away I could see the mountains, their summits dark and cool against the blue sky. Under the slight breeze

the waters of the lake lapped the shore with a gentle murmur, and the sound of the exhaust of a motor boat came faintly to my ears. Not only was it beautiful but also restful, and I gave a contended grin as I thought of the hot city I had left.

Carter returned in a few moments with a tray—a tray which had three tall glasses in which ice tinkled with a pleasing sound. He was not alone, for with him was a tall man whom I judged must have been around forty-five—a man who carried himself with an air of distinction, and whose hair had begun to turn white. When they reached my side, Carter introduced him as his friend Ranville, the inspector from Scotland Yard.

Ranville was not the usual blond Saxon, nor for that matter did his speech have much of an English accent. A glance at his well-knit frame and his brick-red face told that he spent much of his time in the open air. He took my hand with a firm clasp and expressed his regrets that Bartley had been unable to come with me. There was something very likable about the man, and there were the little lines around his lips which showed that he had a sense of humor.

Sinking into our chairs, we slowly sipped our highballs, talking of this and that. The dog, glad at his release from the car, wandered about the yard, only to plunge at last into the waters of the lake. Then, as there came a long silence, Carter said:

"I will take you up to your room, Pelt. We are going out to dinner to-night. That is one reason I am sorry Bartley is not here."

I turned an inquiring glance in his direction, and he gave a grin as he replied:

"You are going to meet a real highbrow for once, Pelt. We dine with Professor Henry Warren. You know this town is his birthplace."

Though like every person who had read the newspapers during the last few months I knew of Henry Warren, I was rather surprised to hear we were to dine with him. Warren had just returned to America after a two years' absence in China. For many weeks before his return the papers had been asking if he were still alive. For months nothing had been heard from his expedition, and his sudden arrival in Hong Kong, after it had been announced that he had been killed by outlaws, had created some excitement.

But it was something else which had caused the name of Warren to go upon the front pages of every newspaper in the world. Not only was he one of the greatest scientists in America, but he was considered our leading authority upon evolution and the origin of man. The world had been startled by a statement he made upon his arrival in Hong Kong: That he had made discoveries which settled for all time the question of the origin of man; but what these discoveries were no one knew, for the scientist had refused to give even a hint. Instead he had simply announced that he would say nothing more until he had time to complete the manuscript of his book.

Carter must have been thinking the same thing that I had been running over in my mind, for there came his laughing voice:

"They say he discovered the missing link or something of that kind."

"They made a big fuss over the cable reports of his discovery in our London papers," was Ranville's comment. "What sort of a chap is he?"

Carter lighted a cigarette and laughed as he answered.

"Well, to start with, Warren is not at all the usual college professor. He has all kinds of money, and his teaching at Harvard is simply a hobby. Most of his time he spends in exploration in various parts of the world. He has been everywhere. But this place happens to be his old home, and he has a big summer estate here. Just now he is writing his book upon whatever it was he found in China."

"They tell me that he has a rather touchy disposition," was my retort.

"Well," drawled Carter, "I doubt if Warren knows what the word 'fear' means. And all his life he has had his own way. He doesn't like many people, saying that they bore him because they know nothing. He can overlook anything but ignorance and stupidity. But it's my idea that when you meet him to-night, you will like him."

With that he gave a glance at his watch and, rising, said that it was time to dress for dinner. Showing me to my room, he told me we would not have to wear our evening clothes, and asked that I be ready in thirty minutes. As he left the room, I went to the windows and glanced without. At my feet lay the lake, and for a moment I watched the sun as it played upon the dis-

tant hills. Then my eyes fell upon the Airedale, asleep under a tree by the water's edge.

When I went downstairs after my bath, I had to wait a few moments for Carter and his friend. Going out into the yard, I placed the car in the garage, and though the dog protested a little, left him with the machine. Starting to stroll rather aimlessly around the grounds, which covered several acres, I was hailed in the end by Carter, who wanted to know where I had been hiding.

As we left the yard, he informed us that we would walk to Warren's, which he said was only a little more than a mile away. We went down the wide street—a street with large summer homes. Homes, set in the midst of great lawns, which were hidden from our sight by the tall hedges which enclosed the grounds. Not only did the street speak of wealth, but also of age, for most of the homes were the large colonial homes of a remote day. Far in the distance I could see the white steeples of the churches which peered above the tall elms.

A few moments later we followed a winding road which ran along the bank of the lake. Here the lawns had given place to extensive summer estates, and the houses were set far back from the road. The road ended before a stone wall—a wall at least ten feet high, which Carter told us surrounded Warren's estate. We passed through the iron gate to go up a driveway. A driveway lined on each side by a high box hedge, and which ended some yards away at a rambling white house. At the door of the house we waited for some one to answer the bell.

For some reason we had a long wait, and Carter had to ring the bell several times before the door was opened. When it was thrown aside, a woman, whom I judged must be the housekeeper, looked at us in a questioning manner. Carter mentioned that we were invited to dinner, and then, after remarking that she knew this, she rather nervously opened the door wider and asked us to come in. Taking us down a long hall, she showed us into the living room and left.

It was an enormous room. The floor was covered with valuable rugs. Etchings and pictures, which Warren had picked up in all parts of the world, were on the walls. Cabinets which were filled with priceless china, and curios of all sorts were on every side of us. It was an odd sort of a room, partly because of the great confusion it was in. It almost looked as if the explorer had simply thrown into the one room all the things which he had picked up in his travels.

But it was an interesting room because of the things it contained. Ranville smiled a happy little smile as he went from one article to another. The various curios so interested us that we forgot the passing of time and almost an hour passed before it dawned upon us that we had been alone in the room a long time. Then all at once Carter gave a glance at his watch and uttered a low exclamation of surprise.

"Do you know what time it is?" he asked.

Without waiting for a reply he went on: "It's now eight o'clock, and Warren said the dinner was to be at seven. It's odd he has kept us waiting as long as this."

There was nothing we could say, and no one spoke.

Again we turned to the curios in the cabinets, but as the moments passed and there was no sign of either our host or his housekeeper, we began to look at one another. It seemed very strange to be invited to dinner and not have our host welcome us. And we had seen no signs of him. There was not a sound in the house, and if it had not been that the housekeeper had let us in, we might have thought we were alone. And then, just as we began to wonder what we had better do, the housekeeper came into the room.

It needed but a glance at her flushed face to tell that not only was she nervous, but also rather perplexed. She was a rather large woman with a determined face—a face which now looked very troubled. She must have known Carter, for she came across the room to his side and said:

“Mr. Carter, my dinner has been waiting since seven o’clock. But Mr. Warren is not in the house.”

He made the usual reply that one would make at such a remark, only to have the woman say:

“He cannot have been delayed, for I know where he is.”

I saw a keen look come into Ranville’s eyes as he turned to look at the woman. She stood before us twisting the corner of her apron with nervous fingers. But it was Carter who asked:

“You know where he is?”

The housekeeper hesitated for a second, then replied:

“Yes. He is in his library. You know, Mr. Carter, that his study and library is in that stone building on

the hill. He spends his afternoons there writing on his new book. I know he went there this afternoon. And—" the voice trailed off into silence.

"And what?" came Ranville's low voice.

The woman raised her head and her eyes swept over the three of us. There was not only a look of anxiety in them but, I thought, also a trace of fear. But why there should be the last I failed to understand. But fear there was. She started to speak, hesitated a second, as if she did not wish to put into words what was in her mind, and then suddenly said in a voice which shook a little:

"Only—I don't know what to say. I have called up his library a dozen times, and he does not answer. I went down to the building and called his name, but no answer. Then I tried the door, and it was locked—and he never locks the door when he is working. Then I pounded on the door, but still no one said anything in reply. And—" Once again came silence, and the look of fear crept again across her face. She gave us one bewildered appealing look and wailed:

"He ought to be in his library. I know he was there, but he won't answer the phone, and he did not come to the door. And when I knocked I thought—" For a moment she paused again.

For some reason none of us spoke. Our eyes were upon the frightened face of the woman, whose nervous fingers were never still. And then all at once she lifted her head and completed the sentence.

"And when I knocked at the door, I thought I heard something move inside the library."

CHAPTER II

"THE CROOKED CROSS"

THERE fell a silence for a moment—a silence in which the housekeeper moved nervously over to a near-by chair. Carter's air of boredom had vanished, and a quick look passed between his English friend and himself; a glance which held until the English police officer slowly nodded his head. Then came Carter's cool voice, with the suggestion that we might go to the summer house and see if Warren was there.

Carter must have known the way, for as we came out of the house to the lawn, he turned to follow a graveled path which led away to the right. It ran between two high box hedges, so high that we could not see over them. Then it passed through an old-fashioned garden, only in the end to run in a winding fashion up a small hill—a hill covered with many trees, and which had upon it a stone building.

When the housekeeper had spoken of the summer house, I had pictured the usual small wooden building; but the place we were approaching was not of wood, nor for that matter was it small. Instead of being what I had expected, it was one of those curious eight-sided buildings which you find once in a while in central New York. And it was the size of the usual small house.

It stood upon the very top of the hill, with a small but very well kept lawn before it. Ivy climbed over its sides, and a small piazza was directly in front of us. When we went upon the veranda, I saw that it gave the best view that I had seen during the day. The lake lay only a few hundred feet away, seemingly at our very feet. Far away the mountains faded away in the growing darkness; but we gave but a glance at the view, turning to the door before us.

It had been a rather warm day, and for that matter it was still warm; but the great oak door in front of us was closed, and the near-by window, which was set very high, was closed also. There was no bell, though upon the door was the most curious knocker that I had ever seen. I raised the copper devil's head which formed the knocker and let it fall. Then we waited for some one to respond.

We knocked again and again, and even shouted. But no reply came from within. Without a word Carter made a gesture, and we followed him around the eight sides of the building. On each side was a large window, but placed about eight feet above the ground; windows with small panes of leaded glass, so high that one could not look within; and windows which were shut. In the rear we found another door, also locked, and though we knocked upon it, it was of no avail.

Back again at the veranda, we stood a moment in thought. After all, there did not seem to be anything else we could do. That Warren was not in his library was, of course, the only logical thing to believe. If he had been, he would not have had the doors and the win-

dows locked upon such a warm evening. The odd thing was that we should be invited to dinner and no host appeared to receive us.

I suggested to Carter that we had better return to the house, and then go home. He listened a moment, gave one reflective glance at the lake, and then turned to look at the closed door before us. Then, with a slight frown on his face, he said:

"Perhaps you're right, Pelt. Yet it's very queer that Warren invited us to dinner and left us in the lurch like this. He must have gone away."

"Carter," came Ranville's voice, "is Warren the sort of man who would invite a guest to dinner and then run off without a word?"

His friend shook his head. "Far from it; of course, Warren does just about as he pleases. But he was very urgent about our coming. Still, he was writing his account of his discoveries in China in his library, and he might have forgotten the passing of time."

"Maybe," drawled Ranville, "but then when it began to grow dark he would know it was late. And besides, that building is locked. The door is closed, the windows down. He would not work in the dark without lights, and it is dark now."

"That is all true," was Carter's retort. "But what would you do? We cannot smash a man's door down simply because he did not turn up to meet his dinner guests. We had better go back to the house."

But when we reached the house, it was only to find the same situation as when we left. Not only had the

owner not returned, but the housekeeper, who met us at the front door, was even more excited than before. Her round face was flushed, and when she led us into the living room, her fingers shook so much that it was a second or so before she could turn on all the lights.

Carter told her that we had been to the summer house, but had seen or heard nothing of Warren. He added that the doors and windows were closed. Then he laughed and said there was no doubt Mr. Warren had been called to town, and had forgotten all about the fact we were to have been his guests. He no sooner stopped speaking, when the woman started, and there was no question that she placed very little faith in what Carter had said.

She told us that if Mr. Warren had gone to town, he would have come to the house for his coat. He worked in a light summer suit, which he never wore to town. And the coat of the suit was hanging on a rack in the hall. Not only that, he never walked if he could ride. And his two cars were in the garage. And then came the statement which surprised us. She paused for a moment, only to suddenly cry:

"I am afraid of that Chinaman."

There came a startled look from Ranville, and he asked in a surprised voice: "What Chinaman?"

In a voice which showed all the distrust and fear that country women have of foreigners she replied:

"There was a Chinaman who came to the door before six o'clock. He asked for Mr. Warren, and I showed him how to get to the library. He wore a white

suit and spoke English pretty good. But I did not like his face; and ever since he came here I have been afraid—”

She paused, her face twitching with emotion, then said:

“As Mr. Warren had not come back to the house, I went to the library just before you came. I knocked and knocked on the door. But no one answered. I had called up on the 'phone, but there was no reply. And when I knocked, or just before I knocked the first time, I thought I heard some one inside. But after I had pounded on the door there was not a sound.”

Suddenly her voice broke and, giving us an appealing look, she asked if we would not go back to the library and break open one of the windows, so we could get within. There was no doubt she was afraid something had happened to Warren. When she finished speaking, there was just one response. It came from Ranville.

“I think we better do as she says, Carter,” was all he said.

At these words the woman ran from the room, returning in a moment with two flashlights, which she gave us. She half started to follow us from the piazza, and then, as if thinking better of her resolution, stopped by the door. As we went down the steps to the ground, our last sight was the housekeeper, standing in the open door with the light from the hall streaming out into the night.

It was now dark. As we retraced our steps, the high hedges on each side of the path caused the walk to

appear like a black tunnel. Above our heads we could catch a glimpse of the stars, and could hear the faint rustle of the branches of the trees. For some reason no one spoke, nor for that matter did we hurry.

Climbing the slight hill, we approached the building, which loomed a dark mass before us. On the veranda we paused for a second, and then the darkness was split by the sudden ray from Carter's flashlight. We tried the door again, but it was still locked, and there came no response to our knock. The window was six or seven feet above our heads, and to reach it some one would have to do a little climbing.

As I was the lightest, they proposed to lift me from the floor to the ledge of the window. If I found it was locked, I was to break the glass, lift the window, and climb into the room. Ranville gave me his hand, and I reached the sill. Balancing myself on the narrow ledge, I tried to peer into the room, but it was a dense black shadow of gloom. Nothing could be distinguished, and though I waited a second, the only sound to come to my ears was the wind in the branches of the near-by trees.

Trying the window, I found it locked. Then Carter reached up to me the second flashlight, and without turning it on I broke the glass with the heavy end. The glass fell with a tinkling sound to the floor, and slipping my hand through the hole, I turned the catch and lifted the window. As I did this, I dropped the flashlight, which fell with a thud within the room. Hesitating a second, I dropped into the library and fumbled on the floor for the flashlight.

I found it without any trouble and, putting on the catch, played the light hastily around the room. Just what I expected to see I cannot say; but the brief sweep which I made over the floor and the walls revealed nothing. The room evidently took in the entire house, and the walls showed only long lines of books, and a gallery which ran around the eight sides. In the center was a large desk, the surface littered with books and papers. But of Warren there was not a trace.

Turning the light to the door, I found the spring lock was on. It took but a second to fling the door open, and Carter and Ranville slipped within. The same question was on both faces, and I slowly shook my head in reply. Carter's first words were for me to find the switch for the lights. The button was near the door, and, pressing it, the room in an instant was a blaze of light.

The room was octagonal in shape, with a window placed high on each of the sides. The wall space was filled with bookcases, and there must have been many thousand volumes. A gallery at a height of around twelve feet ran completely around the room. Even this was filled with books. The furniture was simple. Near the door stood a safe, and there were a number of stands in various corners. But in the center of the room was the largest desk I had ever seen—a huge affair made out of an old-fashioned square piano—with its surface littered with books and papers. Near it stood a typewriter stand, with the machine uncovered. And then, suddenly, we saw something else—something which drove all other thoughts from our minds.

Peering from behind the desk was a foot—a foot which did not move.

We must have seen it at the same moment, for Carter's hand gripped my arm, and for a second we stood silent. Then without a word slowly we went across the floor, knowing what we would find. Though we were sure what was behind the desk, yet it came as a shock. For there, lying on his back upon the floor—with both arms outstretched from the body—lay a man. A man to whom the dinner waiting in the big house would never matter; and it needed but a glance to know that death had come suddenly—and violently.

As Ranville's eyes and mine met, they framed the same question. It was Carter who spoke the two words:

"It's Warren."

The scientist was a man of about fifty, and perhaps a little over that age. The face was self-willed, and the lines around the distorted lips were stern. Though past middle life, his hair was a dense black, without a sign of gray, and there was not a white hair in the close-cropped mustache. One could tell by his figure that he had been a man of the strongest physique. He was dressed in a light summer suit, without a coat, and upon the white shirt, just over the heart, was a crimson stain.

Carter dropped on his knees and made a hasty examination. In a second he turned and pointed with his finger at the dark stain upon the white shirt. Then as he straightened up we saw something else—something we had overlooked. It was a sheet of paper. Evidently it had fallen off the body, though perhaps it

had been placed by its side. A piece of bond paper with but five letters—large letters, evidently written with a hurried hand, the beginning of an incompleted word:

—ANANI—

There had been little conversation, for we were too upset by what we had found. But the piece of paper puzzled us. That Warren had been stabbed there was no doubt; but what the paper meant we could not tell. The letters seemed to mean nothing, and we were not sure that they had anything to do with the crime. For a moment we puzzled over it, and then my eyes wandered again to the still figure upon the floor. As I glanced at it, I gave a sudden start and dropped to my knees for a closer look. And then—then, after one glance, I gave a startled cry.

For there upon the forehead of the murdered man were two faint lines—lines now swollen and red. Not very long lines, nor for that matter very noticeable, but lines which I could not understand. There upon the forehead of the famous scientist were two faint lines cut into the skin. A cross—the lines of which had just been made. Cut faintly, I judged, with a knife. A cross—the lines now red and swollen, and a crooked cross at that.

CHAPTER III

THE BROKEN BOOKCASE

At my cry of astonishment Carter and Ranville had turned in surprise. I simply pointed to the forehead of the murdered man, and they bent forward for a closer look. I saw a startled expression sweep over the Englishman's face, and he slowly shook his head. It was Carter who broke the silence, speaking to no one in particular.

"Do you think that was made by the murderer?"

"There is not the slightest doubt of it," was Ranville's quick retort. "That man has not been dead over two hours, and the cut itself is not any older."

I cast a hurried glance at the grewsome lines of the red cross and gave a little shiver as I asked:

"But what under heavens can it mean; why should there be a mutilation of that kind?"

Carter simply shook his head, and it was the Scotland Yard Inspector who replied:

"We do not know, of course. I have seen a good many murdered people in my time, but as a rule the murderer had never marked his victim. Once in a while you will run into a murder which was committed by a woman—committed in a fit of frenzy. Sometimes in such a case they mark up their victims. But of course we know nothing of this crime. What the mo-

tive was we do not know. How he was killed is rather easy to understand—a long thin knife or dagger.”

The body lay upon the floor near the desk, but about two feet behind it. The position was such that any one coming into the building by the front door would have been unable to see it. Save for the crimson spot upon the shirt and the faint cross upon the forehead, there were no signs of violence.

But the position in which the body lay was rather odd. The man lay flat upon his back, the staring eyes fixed upon the ceiling. But both arms were outstretched as far as they could reach. It was this that puzzled me. I knew it was impossible that the man could have fallen in the position in which he was. Some one must have arranged the body after the crime—but why?

Behind the desk was the chair in which the scientist must have sat while at work. Near it, on the left, was another chair, back of the typewriting stand. And on the other side of the desk, very close to it, was a third chair. The surface of the desk was covered with papers and pamphlets. A small heap of manuscript was piled in an orderly manner in the very center. But of any weapon there was not a sign.

I was just starting to comment upon this when I observed that Ranville was carefully studying the position of the chairs. In a moment he went around the desk, studying the place where a chair stood. Then he turned to us.

“I have an idea I can reconstruct the murder. See the three chairs? There is no trouble about the two

on your side of the desk; one was where Warren sat when at work, the other was for his secretary. But this chair on my side of the desk tells us a good deal.

I cast an inquiring gaze at the chair, a tall antique piece of furniture, while Ranville continued:

"In a room as large as this you will not as a rule find a chair pulled up to a desk, across from which a man is working. But if some one comes in, the natural thing is to bring a chair near the desk, to be as close to the man you are talking to as you can. Now there are other chairs in the room across the desk from where Warren sat; but they are all rather far away. All but that one, and I am pretty sure the murderer sat there."

When he mentioned it, I noticed for the first time that there were a number of other chairs across from us. Some were near the wall, and one in front of the safe; but the chair he was speaking of stood but two feet from the desk. Seeing we did not speak, he went on:

"What happened, I think, was this. The murderer sat in this chair talking to Warren. I have an idea it was some one he knew. Though I do not know his habits, yet I doubt if Warren would spend much time while at work with any one he did not know. The papers said he was rushing his book. Maybe there were some words passed, maybe not. But then, suddenly, Warren was killed."

"Why suddenly?" came Carter's dry question.

"Warren seems to have been a man of strong physical development. There is no evidence of any strug-

gle. In a fight I judge he could have held his own with any one. So if there was no struggle, it follows he was killed suddenly. I judge whoever sat in that chair must have risen—perhaps said he was going—strolled to Warren's side and suddenly stabbed him."

I again turned my eyes to the figure upon the floor, and again the outstretched arms puzzled me.

"But he never fell to the floor in that position," I said.

"He never did," was the reply. "The body was arranged in that position, and the cut on his forehead was made after he was dead."

"But why?" asked Carter.

"God knows!" was the retort. "But then, Carter, this is not our show anyway."

Carter gave a sudden start, saying slowly: "You are right. I will call up our chief of police. He will get a mighty big shock, for there has not been a murder in this town in years. And then"—he paused—"then I'd better call the housekeeper and break the news to her."

There was a telephone in the building near the door. After several attempts Carter got the housekeeper and told her that she had better come to the summer house. Then he held a short conversation with the police station, after which he returned to our side.

"While we are waiting for the police, we had better look this place over," he said.

As I have mentioned, the building was an odd one with eight sides and only one story. There was a window at each side, placed rather high, and the space be-

tween the windows was filled with bookcases. All these cases had glass doors, some of which were open, while others we found locked. The books in the cases were mostly upon science and anthropology—the library of a professional scientist. It was not until we reached the further side of the room that we found anything out of the way. But there we found one of the bookcases with the glass in the locked door smashed into hundreds of pieces—pieces which lay upon the rug at our feet.

Behind the broken glass were seven book shelves with books packed tightly together. They were mostly bound in a uniform red morocco, small volumes, not very thick nor very tall. Only in the third shelf was there a gap, and there several books seemed to be missing.

And the books themselves turned out to be a rather curious collection, yet when one remembered Warren's profession, perhaps they were not so out of place as I first thought. The word "erotic" describes them best, though several went beyond that. Why a scientist should wish to have upon his shelf "The Perfumed Garden," "The Ananga Ranga," "Aretino" and others one could understand. But there were certain other things in the case which seemed out of place.

Side by side with the classics of the underworld of literature stood the witty and immoral romances of the eighteenth century of France. But there were a few modern books, decidedly pornographic in type, which flanked the more classical ones. An odd collection at the best, worth a good deal of money, it is true. But

the oddest thing to explain was why some one had broken the glass to get at the contents of the case.

The Englishman gave a low whistle, and I saw his eyebrows raise. Reaching in his hand, it came forth with a volume. It stood on the shelf which had the empty space, the one where, if the broken gap told the truth, several books were missing. He turned the leaves slowly, shrugged his shoulders at several of the engravings, and then without a word handed the book to me. It was the first volume of De Sade's "Justine," the first edition with the illustrations. I remembered once hearing Bartley say that it was the worst book ever written and very difficult to secure. In turn, without speaking, I handed the thin volume to Carter just as Ranville expressed what was in his mind.

"That's not only a pretty rare book, but it is also a rather rotten one. It looks very much as if some one smashed the glass in this case to get at the books. What they took I cannot tell, though it might be the other volumes of that "Justine." I cannot understand why any murderer should want the books. Besides, it's the French edition, and not every chap reads French, you know."

We agreed to this, and placed the book back in the case. Then climbing a narrow winding stairs, we went up to the gallery. It ran around the entire length of the room—a narrow gallery, built evidently to give more space for books. The walls were lined with books, thousands of them, of every kind. But there were no doors or glass before the cases in the gallery.

Nothing had been disturbed so far as we could see.

I glanced over the rail to the floor below, giving a shudder as my eyes fell upon the still figure by the desk—the figure with the outstretched arms.

Leaving the gallery, we tried the rear door, finding as we expected that it was locked. As both doors had a spring lock, it would have been only necessary for the murderer to close them when he went out. But why the windows were down, and also locked, puzzled us. It had been a warm day, and it hardly seemed possible that Warren had worked in a room without any fresh air. We were commenting on this when there came a voice from the front door, and two men stepped into the room.

One was a very short man with a vivid red face, and I could tell by his blue uniform that it was the chief of police. He was very warm, as if he had been hurrying, and there was a questioning look in the glance he gave us. He had a rather kindly face, though it was not an over-intelligent one, and I decided that he did not fancy the task before him. The young man with him he introduced as the coroner, a young man named Hasty.

The chief held a short conversation with Carter and then went over to the desk. He came to a sudden halt by the body, and I saw the look of dismay which swept over his face. Even the doctor seemed shocked, but went about his examination at once. When he had finished, he rose to answer the eager questions of the chief.

He informed us the man had been dead several hours, and that he had been stabbed. The blow had

evidently reached the heart, and the scientist must have died at once. The faint cross on the forehead he could not explain, but he agreed that it had been made after death.

"But," came the heavy voice of the chief, "why should any one wish to kill Warren? There are very few people in the town that know him. Though this is his birthplace, he has been away so long that he has hardly any friends here. He never cared to bother much with people."

He paused to throw a curious look around the room.

"If he was stabbed, where is the weapon?"

We assured him that we had seen no signs of a weapon, though we had looked the building over. Carter said he agreed with the chief regarding Warren's acquaintance in the town. There was no doubt he was their most distinguished citizen, but he had been away so many years that few knew him. But why he had been murdered, or by whom, there was not the slightest kind of a clew.

The police chief listened, his face growing very long as Carter went on. Like most police chiefs in small places, his work was the usual small town routine. Confronted with a murder, and one as mysterious as now before him, he did not know what to do. And as he gave a glance at the body on the floor, I knew that he was much perplexed.

As Carter and the chief started a low conversation, Ranville and I went to the desk. No one had looked at the papers on its surface, and as we started to glance through them, we found just about what we had ex-

pected. The greater part of them were notes, and as I read a sentence or two, I could see that they dealt with Warren's two years' stay in the heart of China. Many of them had crude drawings of bones and fossils. But the handwriting was rather bad, and I did not bother to read more than a few lines.

There were a number of books upon the desk, but they were mostly scientific works of reference. One red-covered volume turned out to be a popular mystery story, and beside it stood one of the adventure story magazines. A number of typewritten sheets, evidently corrected work of his secretary were near the edge of the desk, the pages filled with corrections in red ink. But there was nothing of importance, only the natural data of a scientist who was writing an account of his last expedition.

Just as I was about to turn away from the desk, my eyes fell upon a piece of paper which was peering out from under the typewritten manuscript. I pulled it forth to see what it might be. It was part of a typewritten letter dated the day before, but with no address or signature. There could not have been a signature, for the lower half of the letter was missing. The sheet was torn across as if some one had wished to destroy the signature. It read:

"Tuesday.

"Mr. Henry Warren,

"My dear Professor,

"I will call upon you to-morrow around five o'clock. I feel sure you can spare me a few moments. If I can only make you see how great a thing you can do for

humanity, I am sure you will take my viewpoint. The consequences of the step you are taking are so momentous that unless—”

And there the letter ended, for the rest of the sheet had been torn off.

It was a curious sort of a letter, and seemed to contain a warning of some sort. It was written upon a typewriter whose ribbon was far from clean. Not only did it contain a warning, but it seemed to me there was a threat in the words. But more important than anything else was the statement that the writer would call upon Warren. As it had been written the day before, Warren must have seen the person only an hour before he died.

Without a word I handed the letter to Ranville and watched his face as he read. When he came to the end, I saw his eyebrows raise a little, and he turned to me.

“This looks important, Pelt. Any signs of the missing portion of the sheet?”

I shook my head, and we both turned to the desk. We went through every paper, lifting them from each other, and even turning the pages of the books. But we found nothing. Then we turned our attention to the wastebasket, turning the contents upon a small rug. But the basket contained only the discarded notes which had been thrown aside and a few matches. The missing half of the letter we did not find.

As we paused, I noticed that the chief and Carter were before the bookcase—the bookcase with the

broken glass. Ranville placed the letter in his pocket and said: "What do you make of it?"

I told him what I thought, that it contained both a warning and a threat, and then said that it looked as if the missing part had been taken in order to destroy the signature.

"True enough," came the drawling answer. "But why did they not take the entire letter? Why destroy half of it and leave the other? If the whole note had been taken we would never have known anything about it. To take but half seems a very illogical thing to do."

Hearing our voices, Carter and the chief came to the desk and asked what we had found. Ranville handed him the letter, and after they had both looked at it the chief held it a long while in his hand. His face was a study, and he slowly shook his head. He might have spoken if Carter had not said:

"The chief agrees with me that the murder of Professor Warren is going to make a great deal of comment. He will have the inquest to-morrow, and hopes before then to have something to go on. As it stands now all we know is that Warren was murdered, but nothing else. The—"

There came a commotion at the door, and we turned, only to see the housekeeper rush into the building. Her face was red as if she had been running, but why she had taken so long to come to the library after Carter called up I could not tell. For a second she leaned against the door as if out of breath, and then gave a quick glance around the room. In her eyes was

terror, and the glance at length rested upon Carter. With one step in his direction, she gasped in a trembling voice so low that we could barely hear her:

"Mr. Warren—is—is he dead?"

Carter nodded, and again the woman's eyes swept the room. This time they went slowly as if seeking for something, and as if afraid of what she might find. Suddenly she stiffened into attention as her glance fell upon the foot of the dead man, which could be seen around the desk. Then slowly, a step at a time, she crossed the floor to a place beyond the desk. There she stood, silently looking down at the still figure of her employer. The red had faded from her cheeks, and her face was a dull white. Slowly she turned, her eyes asking the question before her lips spoke:

"Was he murdered?" came the quivering voice.

"Yes," some one said.

For a moment she did not speak. Again her eyes came back to the silent figure. For an instant as her lips moved I thought she would speak, but she gave a shudder and shut them tightly. But the flush had come back to her face, and when she turned toward us, I could see the veins in her forehead throb. And then suddenly, in a shrill voice which rang through the room, she shrieked: "I knew it, I knew it. It's that secretary. I knew that girl would—"

But the sentence was not completed. As the shrill voice rose higher and higher, her hands began to beat the air; the voice died away in her throat as if suddenly cut off. Then with a little gasp she staggered a second and fell fainting to the floor.

CHAPTER IV

WE DISCUSS THE CRIME

So unexpected was the woman's action that for a second none of us stirred. It was the doctor who reached her first. The eyes opened with a little flutter, and the color came flooding back into her cheeks. As he placed her in a chair, her hands went out in a confused, questioning gesture, as if seeking aid. Then when she realized what had happened, she cast one horrified look in the direction of the body.

When she was feeling more composed, the chief tried to question her. But she refused to say a word. Before she fainted, in a voice which rang with conviction, she had practically accused the secretary of the murder. Now in a listless tone she refused to say a word, shutting her thin lips in a determined manner. At last, seeing that she did not care to speak, and in fact would not, the chief suggested that the coroner assist her back to the house.

When they had left, he turned with an astonished air to Carter.

"What in the devil did she mean by that crack about the secretary?"

"I don't know," was his reply. "She seemed to be a bit angry. Who is the secretary anyway?"

"Why it's the former stenographer of Judge Wil-

liams. She is as good looking a girl as you will find in many a day. But that housekeeper is crazy if she thinks that girl killed Warren."

"Well," came the drawling voice of Ranville, "I know nothing about the girl you speak of; but if I were you, I would look her up."

A few moments later, concluding that we could do no good if we remained, we left. It was growing late, and the police had much work to do. Besides we were beginning to feel the need of the dinner we had not eaten. We told the chief all we knew, showed him the broken glass in the bookcase, and mentioned what the housekeeper had said regarding the visit of a Chinaman. Last of all we pointed out the faint cross on Warren's forehead. This seemed to impress him more than anything else, and I saw his eyes grow big. Then with Carter's remark, that we would aid him in any manner he wished, we said "good night" and went out.

The stars were bright above our heads, but it was dark at that. The path between the hedges was a dense black line, and the trees loomed in a somber manner above us. Reaching the lawn before the house, we saw that the building was a blaze of lights, though we glimpsed no one. We did not turn to the house, but instead passed through the iron gateway and out to the road.

No one spoke, and I judged that none of us felt like speaking. As we went along, I thought of the famous scientist, who only a few short weeks before had been hailed in every paper of the world. There had been many wild guesses made as to what he found, more so

after he had said that the question of man's origin was forever settled. What he had found no one knew, and he refused to say, simply stating that it would all come out in his book. And then the whole controversy burst into flame.

This was caused by the theological argument which was raging over evolution. The controversy had increased after Warren's statement. Back and forth flew the arguments. The scientists contented themselves by saying that every intelligent person believed in evolution, and that if Warren said he had found the final proof that settled it. His reputation and word was enough for the men of science. On the other hand, theologians and demagogues who knew nothing about science cried long and loud that Warren could not have found any proofs of evolution, for, as they said, evolution was not a fact.

In all this controversy—one which filled many pages of the papers—Warren bore no part. As soon as he arrived in America, he had gone directly to his home and made the announcement that he would have his manuscript ready as soon as possible. Only one statement he gave the papers—it was to repeat what he had said before: that he had found the final proofs. The proofs which settled for all time the question of man's origin. After that he was silent. And now he was murdered, and I pictured the papers when they heard of his death.

And then I began to wonder why he should have been killed. A man of his decided personality must, of course, have made enemies. I puzzled over the man

from China, who the housekeeper said had come to the house. I played with this thought for a while, only to decide that perhaps it was better to stop wondering about the case until I had more facts to puzzle over. And by the time we came in sight of Carter's home the only thing I was thinking about was something to eat.

The tall grandfather's clock was striking eleven as we entered the living room. With the remark that we must be hungry, Carter went out into the kitchen saying he would see if the cook had left anything in the ice box. Ranville and myself dropped into the nearest chairs. I was too tired to talk, and the experiences of the last few hours had not been pleasant. But to look at the Scotland Yard Inspector one would never have guessed that anything had taken place. The fine face of the Englishman was as peaceful and contented as if he had just returned from a wedding—instead of a murder. He lay back in his chair, his eyes half closed, watching the curling smoke of his cigarette.

Carter's voice hailed us from the kitchen, and we rose and joined him. Upon the white enameled table was a cold chicken, three bottles of ale, and some rye bread. We pulled our chairs to the table and set to work. When the chicken had become but a memory, Carter rummaged in the ice box and found a pie—a pie of which we did not leave a crumb.

The lunch over, we went out on the large veranda; the night was cool, with a slight breeze, and down at the edge of the lawn we could hear the water lapping on the shore. As Carter handed me a cigar, I happened to think of Trouble, locked in the garage, and

went down to rescue him. He greeted me with a loud bark, but at my command followed to the piazza and dropped by the side of my chair. For a while nothing was said, and in the darkness I watched the glowing tips of my friends' cigars. It was Carter who broke the silence, saying to no one in particular:

"Well—what do you think about the murder?"

Ranville's drawling voice came floating from his chair, and his tone was serious:

"It looks to me, Carter, as if we had stumbled upon what will prove one of the most perplexing murder mysteries we have ever seen. There are some very curious things about this affair; and it's my idea it's going to prove rather difficult to solve."

"It will cause a sensation all right," was the reply. "You know for weeks Warren's name has been on the front pages of the papers. First there came the accounts of his trip to China. When he did not return at the time expected, the papers began to say his expedition was lost. Then the outlaw war broke in China, and it was thought he was killed; and when he suddenly made his appearance, he certainly got a lot of publicity."

As he paused, I added my bit. I reminded them that his statement that he had settled the question of evolution had made more comment than anything else.

"That's right," replied the Englishman. "Even in London the old *Times* gave a good many columns to that feature. But as he refused to say what it was he had found, the whole affair led to some little controversy."

"You have had a good deal of experience in murder cases in your Scotland Yard work," I said to the Inspector. "What do you think was back of Warren's death?"

Ranville was silent a while, replying at last:

"That is the question. It is pretty hard to say from what we found to-night, just what could be the motive. Men are murdered as a rule for three reasons—robbery, revenge, or, say, in a sudden passion. Now it does not look like robbery, for we saw no signs of anything being taken. That is, unless we figure the murderer broke the glass of the bookcase and took a book. But that seems hardly reasonable."

"Still some one did take a book or two from that case," was my retort.

"Perhaps. Of course Warren might have broken the glass himself by accident. Then again, though I do not know much about books, I do know a bit about that kind of literature. Once in a while we clean up some book dealers who put it out in London. And I know this. None of that stuff sells at a very high figure. It's rare, of course, mostly because it's sold under cover. But a few pounds would buy anything in that case. It does not seem reasonable to start out by assuming he was murdered for a book of that class."

"Well, let's put that out of the question and say revenge," suggested Carter.

"That would look more reasonable," Ranville commented. "A man of Warren's type would, of course, have made enemies. And the two odd things about the murder—the position in which we found the body and

the cross on the forehead—seem to suggest revenge. You cannot tell what he might have done while he was in China. He may have made enemies there.”

“That suggests the Chinaman who the housekeeper says came to the house about six,” was my remark.

“Maybe and maybe not,” was Ranville’s quick retort. “I admit that six o’clock is pretty near the time Warren was killed. Also, why a Chinaman should wish to see him is something which must be looked into. But I have had a good deal of experience with criminal Chinese in our Limehouse section of London. They are capable of the most devilish torture, the weirdest kinds of murder. But I fail to remember a single case where they ever marked their victim after death. And no Chinaman, it seems to me, would ever mark his victim with a cross. Of course, once in a while you run into one who goes wild, and there is no telling what he might do. But as a rule, though they will in seeking revenge impose the most cruel tortures on some of their victims, they do not as a rule mark them after death.”

“Disfigurement after a killing is often the work of a frenzied woman,” was Carter’s shrewd remark.

“That’s true, Carter. Women, far more than men, are apt not to be satisfied with murder alone. When a woman in a sudden passion kills a man, she often, while the rage is on her, goes further.”

“And that makes one think of what the housekeeper said about the secretary,” was my comment.

There was a moment’s silence, broken by Carter’s saying:

“I wonder what the housekeeper meant by that re-

mark. She certainly shut up like a clam when we tried to question her. There is something back of it—at least back of the housekeeper's attitude.”

“Well,” came Ranville's voice, “there is one thing sure; I think I am right when I say that whoever killed Warren was some one who knew him. He sat in that chair, the one across from the desk, and I think perhaps I am right when I add that he might have gone to Warren's side to say good-by and then plunged the knife into him. But why he paused to arrange the body on the floor and to make the cross on his forehead I cannot say, but—”

Just what he might have added I do not know. We were interrupted by the dog suddenly rising to his feet and starting to growl. Deep, heavy growls at some object we could not see. Then came the sound of footsteps on the walk, and a deep voice came from the lawn:

“Hearing voices, Mr. Carter, I could not resist stopping.”

As the man came up the steps, I pushed the dog behind my chair, telling him to be quiet. Carter rose and turned on the porch lamp. For a moment the light, after the dense darkness, blinded me. I wondered who could be coming to see Carter at this late hour. It was a very tall and an extremely thin man who accepted the chair which Carter pulled out. A man with a deep lined face and nervous shifting eyes. As he came over to the chair, I saw that he was wearing a clergyman's collar, though he did not look as calm as most of the clergymen I have seen.

He proved to be Carter's next-door neighbor, and he told us he was on his way home when he heard the sound of our voices. As he talked, I could see that he was of a nervous, restless disposition, for his hands were never still, and he moved his feet in an uneasy manner. His voice was rather harsh, though the English he used was perfect.

After the introductions had been acknowledged Carter said:

"Woods is my next-door neighbor. He's been in England, Ranville."

The clergyman admitted that he had been in England many times. He changed the conversation at once by remarking:

"I have just come from down town, and they are all excited over the murder of Mr. Warren. I did not know Warren very well, but it seems almost incredible a man of his position should have met with such a sudden death. Have they any idea who the guilty person is?"

We all shook our heads, and then Carter went into a brief description of the finding of the body. The eyes of the minister grew larger as he went on, and I saw a horrified look sweep across his face. As I did not know many clergymen, I studied the man before me with interest. It was easy to see that he had a good education, and I wondered why he had buried himself in such a small country town. Long before Carter had finished I had decided that the minister was as nervous a man as I have ever met. His hands were never still, and his eyes were as uneasy as his hands.

He said nothing until Carter mentioned the secretary, and then half rose as he burst forth:

"Why, of all things," came the rough high-pitched voice, "I know Mr. Warren's secretary very well. She comes to my church. You must know her also—Miss Harlan?" and he turned to Carter.

Carter shook his head; then said he knew her by sight and that was all. He added she was a very fine-looking girl.

"That's very true," the minister eagerly replied. "She is not only a very fine-looking girl, but a very fine girl in all ways. It's absurd to think she knows anything about Mr. Warren's death. I saw her myself this afternoon."

The conversation for some reason lagged after this, and after a while the minister gave a glance at his watch, and then with a sudden exclamation rose saying it was late. We said "good night," and he went down the steps and was lost to sight. After he was out of hearing Ranville asked:

"How long have you taken up with clergymen, Carter?"

His friend laughed. "Oh, I do not know him so very well. He has lived here for some time. It seems that about fifty years ago his grandfather—for some unknown reason—built the church next door. Woods sort of fell into it. He has a good deal of money they say, but very few people ever go to his church. In fact he supports it himself. You see he is about as high church as you can find—all sorts of rituals and that kind of thing. They don't go very well in a place

like this. Then again, he is always attacking something."

"Attacking something; what do you mean?" was Ranville's puzzled question.

Carter laughed. "You do not have very many men of that type in your country. You see, Woods has but one duty in life. It is to try and make the rest of us think and do the things which he believes are right. Every little while he breaks loose—attacks Sunday baseball, dances, auto rides on Sunday. I do not know just how many of those things he is mixed up in. But I do know that he holds office in most of the more rabid reform societies in the state and nation. As he has money and makes heavy contributions, he is sort of a power in some circles. But his church does not amount to much here, mostly because no one goes. Though, after all, it is the most beautiful one we have. He is an odd duck at the best."

He rose with this and turned off the light. For a while we sat in the darkness smoking, no one speaking. I begun to feel sleepy and wanted to hint that it was time to go to bed. Once in a while the dog at my side gave a little sigh of contentment. And then, just as Carter started to suggest that it was time we retired, Ranville gave a little laugh and said:

"You know I have been thinking about this murder. There is no doubt about the sensation it will make. Your police chief, it seems to me, will have far more on his shoulders than he can manage."

"For once in your life you spoke the truth," was Carter's dry comment.

"Righto," was the cheery response, "and I have been thinking—" and the Englishman paused.

"That's twice you have been thinking, Ranville," was Carter's reply. "Suppose you tell us what you were thinking about."

"Just this. Here are the three of us, all engaged in some sort or another of criminal work. You are with the Secret Service, Carter. Pelt is the right-hand man of your big expert, Bartley, and I am with Scotland Yard. Why should we not take a hand in the case?"

"What for?" growled Carter. "Good Lord, man, don't you know this is my first vacation in four years? And it's your first in some time. Of course Pelt here never does much work anyway."

I started to protest, but Ranville gave me no time to speak.

"Well, Carter," he said, "I would like to keep close to this affair. It would give me some idea of how you work in this country."

"Good Lord, Ranville," protested his friend. "Where do you think you are? This is a small country town. How do you think this will be handled? In England you would call in the Yard, with their fingerprint experts, photographers, microscopes, and with hundreds of men in every part of England working under one department. We have nothing of the kind in this country. If this case is ever solved, it will be by what we call 'bull luck.'"

"True enough," came the cheerful response. "But this is going to be one of the famous murder cases of the century. You want to remember Warren is one of

the best-known scientists in the world. And he was murdered, you know. I thought we might take a little hand in it. Sort of play along, as you say in America, with the police."

There was a more interested tone in Carter's voice as he asked:

"What do you propose?"

"Just this. Suppose we divide things. Let us start with the visit of the Chinaman. Some one must find out about him. Now I have had extensive dealings with them; suppose I look into that end. You follow what new developments came out at the inquest, for there are always developments at such hearings. You know the chief and can work with him."

"What shall I look after?" was my eager question.

Carter anticipated his friend by saying:

"You being the youngest, Pelt, and as I once heard John Bartley say—young and romantic—can look into the matter of the secretary. We have been told she is good to look at."

I started to reply, but Ranville gave me no time.

"Really," he said, "I am serious. This case is going to be a sensational affair before it is over. And if we all take a hand in it, we can save time. Your police chief will need all the aid he can get before it is over."

Carter rose to his feet, and his voice came floating down to us out of the darkness.

"Well, I suppose it's all right. But I never knew it to fail. Every time Pelt goes anywhere in the summer he brings a murder. It happened that way last year and the year before. All you have to do is invite Pelt

to visit you, and you can be pretty sure some one will be found dead within a few hours after he arrives. Sometimes I even wonder if he kills them himself. But I will agree with you, though I have but one suggestion to make, Ranville—”

“What might that be?” came the question.

“A very simple one. That we go to bed; it is now after one?” And with that he started into the house. A moment later we rose and followed him.

CHAPTER V

THE INQUEST

TEN o'clock the next morning found us crossing the village green. In front of us was the Court House, where the inquest was to be held, its front steps filled with people. Cars were parked along the streets and were arriving every second. There was no doubt the sudden death of Warren had proven to be the greatest sensation of many years and people were coming from all directions to hear what the inquest might bring forth.

We pushed our way through the crowd on the Court House steps and into the building. The inquest was to be held on the second floor, and the steps leading to the room were crowded. I doubt if we would have been able to get through the people if it had not been for one of the village policemen, who, recognizing Carter, managed to get us to the second floor. And even here the hallway was filled. When we succeeded in getting into the court room, it was to find people standing along the walls.

In some manner the chief recognized us in the crowd and beckoned for us to come to the front of the room. After much pushing, we reached the rail which divided the spectators from the space reserved for the court officials. Behind it we found three chairs had

been reserved for us. Behind the desk where the judge sat when Court was in session was the coroner, who gave us a half smile of greeting. The chief came over to our side, and in reply to a question from Carter, if he had discovered anything new, shook his head.

The court room was packed to overflowing—an uneasy mass of men, whose eyes showed the excitement they were under. Over the room hung the low murmur of whispers, and the few women in the place gazed eagerly around.

Though all space was taken, and people were even standing two deep along the walls, yet at the door late arrivals were trying to crowd their way into the room. The murder had brought them out—that strange streak of cruelty or morbidness which is in so many people. I saw Ranville give the place a curious look, and knew that he was thinking of similar scenes in England.

The sheriff, a tall, heavy-set man, rose and announced that no more people would be allowed in the room and requested that those present be silent while the inquest was on. And then, within the next ten minutes, the jury was chosen. It took but a little time to secure them, for they simply called twelve men—men who filed into the jury box with a very serious air, and men who also seemed secretly well pleased at the place of importance which was given.

In rapid succession Carter, Ranville and myself went on the stand and told the story of our finding of the body. Ranville's announcement that he was an Inspector of Scotland Yard created a good deal of comment, and I heard whispers go around the room. But

our testimony was of little importance, for we had nothing new that we could tell. When I stepped down from the stand, the coroner looked at the papers on his desk, then motioned to the chief and after a moment's whispered conversation called the name of the housekeeper, Mrs. Lawrence.

The housekeeper went slowly to the chair and seated herself with a tired air. For some reason she was wearing black, and her red face was stern as she turned to face the coroner. She was far from being a good-looking woman, and I judged as I looked at her that she had a temper. The mouth was small, and the narrow lips were set in a stern thin line. Ranville gave her one look and leaned over me to say: "She has got her back up over something."

Her first statements had to do with Warren's household. She had been his housekeeper for some years, living in the house when he was out of the country. I judged she thought that her long years of service had given her a place of authority, for she spoke as if she had complete reign over the household. When he returned from China, she had secured a cook and a maid and there was also a man working around the grounds. She told us it was Warren's practice to work in his library during the afternoon and that he had dinner about seven o'clock.

"Did he work there alone?" asked the coroner.

"Oh, no; his secretary, Florence Harlan, was there with him."

She paused a moment and then went on to say that she understood that Mr. Warren was writing a book,

though she was not sure. All visitors to the house afternoons were told to go to the library. There had not, however, been many people to see him the last few days.

"Now," came the coroner's voice. "Suppose you tell us just what you were doing yesterday afternoon."

"Well," answered the woman, "Mr. Warren had told me Mr. Carter and two friends were coming to dinner. I arranged the dinner with the cook and spent part of the afternoon getting the dining room ready. About seven o'clock Mr. Carter came with his friends. I was getting rather worried then."

"What were you worried over?"

She was silent for a moment, then went on. "Mr. Warren had not come to the house. He always stopped working about six and dressed for dinner. But when it got after six, I called the library. In fact, I called it on the phone several times, but I received no reply. Then I went out of the house, and, going to the library, knocked on the door. No one answered. But—" She paused.

A murmur started around the room as they waited for her next words. She paused and continued:

"But I thought I heard a sound in the library."

"What do you mean by a sound?" was the question.

She hesitated as if not sure of her words, then said:

"It's hard to say. It was just as I started to reach my hand for the knocker upon the door. A sound hard to describe, like a chair being pushed across the floor, or like glass breaking; I am not sure."

I gave a quick glance at Ranville, who sat with his head on one side looking at the witness. His face was calm, yet there was an interested look in his eyes. Like breaking glass the woman had said, and I thought of the broken door of the bookcase. I remembered that both Carter and his friend had thought it absurd that the murderer should have had anything to do with the broken door of the bookcase. But at the woman's words I began to wonder if they were right.

"What did you do after you heard this noise?"

"It was hardly what you would call a noise," retorted the woman. "It was very faint, but I thought I heard something. I knocked on the door then, but no one answered. The door was locked."

"Was it Mr. Warren's habit to have his door locked when working in his library?" asked the coroner.

"I never knew him to lock it, sir. It was a fairly warm day, and Mr. Warren since he has been in China and South America liked plenty of heat."

The coroner glanced at some notes he had, then asked:

"Did any one come to the house during the afternoon—any one who wanted to see Mr. Warren?"

The woman's voice was eager as she replied: "Yes, sir, a Chinaman."

The room stirred as one person and I could see the people bend forward for the next question.

"What did you mean by your last answer?"

"Just a little before six the door bell rang. When I went to the door there was a Chinaman there. He wore a white suit and asked for Mr. Warren. I told him

where the library was and showed him how to get there. He thanked me and went up the walk to the building."

"Did you see him again?"

"No, sir, I did not see him again. I never saw him before for that matter. He did not give any name."

To my great surprise the chief and the coroner held a brief conversation, talking in a very low tone. When it was over the woman was excused. What surprised me was that she had not been asked about her statement in the library regarding the secretary. Then, in a sudden frenzy, she had almost accused the girl of murdering the scientist. The chief had heard what she said and the doctor who was the coroner had heard it, but they had not asked her a single question. And I wondered.

Then the doctor made a short statement, saying that Warren had been killed by either a dagger or a thin knife. The blow had struck the heart and he had died at once. The explanation was made in short, concise sentences without the usual medical terminology. He closed by saying that he must have been dead around two hours when he saw him. As that was some time after eight Warren had been killed between six and half past.

The next witness proved to be the man that worked around Warren's place. The gardener was the usual type of a workman, rather dull, with a heavy, uninteresting face. He announced somewhat loudly that he knew nothing about the murder and said that he had not known that his master was dead until he heard the news in the village late in the evening. When asked

about the Chinaman, he replied that he had not seen him. Most of the afternoon he had been working in the garden, which, I judged from his testimony, was so placed that he could not see the library. It seemed as if his testimony was to be of no importance when, just after he had been excused, the coroner called him back to ask if he had seen any one around the library.

He stumbled back into his seat and thought a moment, then said:

"Can't say that I did. But when I was going to the house after the six o'clock whistle blew, I saw something. Don't think it is of any importance."

"What was it?" was the question.

"Well," came the slow reply, "I came down by the library, and I seen a rowboat going round the bend of the point. Did not see the person in it because the boat was just getting out of sight."

The coroner suggested he could not swear that the boat had come from Warren's shore, and was surprised by having the man say he was pretty sure it had. But why he was sure of this he was unable to say, and though the doctor pressed him to explain, he could not. He left the stand having given, as far as I could see, no evidence of any importance.

Again the coroner and the chief held a short conversation. Then the doctor surprised us by saying that the inquest would be adjourned until after lunch. As it was only eleven-thirty this seemed rather odd, for there was still time to hear another witness. As it was, the morning session had been of little value. Nothing had been brought out that we did not know, and

the testimony of the gardener regarding the row boat seemed of little worth. He was not sure the boat had come from Warren's shore line.

The crowd filed out with a great deal of noise. They seemed to be a bit disappointed. There had been no spectacular revelations, nothing sensational. Just the bald recital of the murder and nothing more. One could tell by their talk, and the shaking of heads, that the inquest had not proven what they expected. And after they had all gone out we went to the car and drove back to Carter's for an early lunch.

Lunch was a rather quiet affair and it was not until we had gone out on the veranda for our smoke that any one mentioned the inquest. Then, when we had settled back in our chairs to enjoy the thirty minutes which remained before our return to the Court House, I asked what they thought of the morning session.

Carter, watching the smoke from his cigar as it curled away in the breeze, replied:

"Well, Pelt. It was not productive of any information. The most remarkable thing to me was the fact they did not ask that housekeeper a single question about the secretary. After her remarks last evening one would have expected that they would have been followed up."

"I have an idea," said Ranville, "they may have saved that for this afternoon. There was only one thing that interested me."

"What was that?" I asked.

There was a thoughtful look on his face as he replied:

"The statement of the gardener about some one in a boat."

"Why, you don't think there was anything in that?" was my surprised comment. "He did not even know if the boat had come from Warren's shore."

"Maybe," drawled the Englishman. "You want to remember that so far there has been no evidence of any one who had been to the house except the Chinaman. Now the housekeeper says she heard some one in the library just as she knocked on the door; heard the glass break. Perhaps she did, and if so, I have an idea that Warren had already been killed, and maybe she heard the murderer."

"But, good God, Ranville," came Carter's disgusted voice, "that means you think the murderer smashed the glass to steal a book. I cannot believe that Warren was killed for a fool erotic book."

"I do not say that he was killed for a book. In fact I have grave doubts if the murderer even took the books. But he may have smashed that case by accident. What I was getting at is simply this. You have the Chinaman who went to the library. No one saw him come back. You have that farm-hand, or whatever you call him, who saw the boat. Now did the Chinaman go away in a boat he found on the shore or was it some one else?"

For a few moments we discussed this, reaching in the end no agreement. Of one thing we were certain. It was that, save for the Chinaman, there had been no evidence of any one going to the library during the afternoon. But what the testimony of the man who

had charge of the grounds could mean we were not sure. There was no way of telling if the boat had come from Warren's shore or not. And then with a hurried glance at his watch Carter ended the argument by saying we had just time to reach the Court House before the afternoon session opened.

We found the room again filled and had just time to take our chairs as the jury filed back into the box. Then, with one glance around the room, the coroner recalled the housekeeper to the stand. As she took her chair she seemed very much surprised as if she had not expected to testify again. With a look at a paper which he held in his hand the coroner asked the first question.

"You told us this morning that Mr. Warren worked every afternoon in his library. Did his secretary work with him?"

The woman nodded and then said: "Yes."

The coroner went on: "What time did she return to the house yesterday afternoon?"

I saw a strange look flit across the woman's face and she replied: "Around four o'clock."

"Was that her usual time to return?"

"No, sir. As a rule she worked until five and often until seven."

"And did she give any reason for her return at this early hour?"

The woman's face flushed a little and then she said:

"No, sir. That is, she did not say why she was back so early, but I was surprised to see her—more so because of what she did."

There came a silence in the room and the low whispers that one could hear after each statement died away. The coroner, who seemed to know just what the woman would testify, asked:

"You say, 'What she did.' What do you mean?"

The housekeeper had been speaking in a low voice without any apparent show of emotion. Now she raised her head, and her voice was quick and impulsive as she replied:

"I was in the living room when the secretary returned. She rushed in the front door and ran upstairs. She lived at the house. I thought that she had gone to her room for something. I thought nothing of this until a few moments later she came downstairs; in her hand was her suit case."

"Her suit case?"

"Yes. And she seemed very excited. Her face was flushed and when I spoke to her she was very angry."

"What did you say to her?"

"Why, naturally, I asked her where she was going. Seeing the suit case and knowing that it was not time for Mr. Warren to stop work, I wondered what had happened." She paused, and as she did not continue, the coroner asked:

"Well, what did she say?"

The woman was silent a moment then replied:

"She banged the suit case down on the floor and said, 'I am going away. You can tell Mr. Warren I won't do any more work for him.'" Again she hesitated, as if holding something back. Once more the coroner had to request her to finish her statement. She

raised her head, sweeping the court room with a glance, and then her eyes came back to the coroner. Again he barked out:

"What did she say?"

"She said," was the slow reply, "Mr. Warren ought to be killed. He ought to be killed."

A murmur of astonishment went around the room, and I saw from the coroner's face that the answer was unexpected. There had been nothing of value until the present testimony, and now, all at once, there had come into the crowded room the ringing of a threat. I saw Carter shift in his chair and he bent forward and whispered something in the Englishman's ear. But what it was I did not know. And then after a moment of surprise the coroner tried to gain more information from his witness.

But she had told him all she knew. She said the secretary had been very angry, and that her voice had risen when she made her remark "that Warren ought to be killed." But why she had said this she could not tell. The girl, a moment later, had picked up her suit case and left the house. She had watched her from a front window and saw her go out to the road. Where she had gone, or the reason for her action, she did not know. And though the coroner asked her many questions yet he gained nothing in return; for the woman knew of no reason why the secretary should have left the house or above all why she had made the remark that she did.

When she left the stand there was a different atmosphere about the inquest. We had spent the morning in

getting nowhere. Now all at once there had come a mystery—the mystery of why the secretary should have rushed into the house for her bag, why she had left, and, above all, the reason for her statement against her employer.

In rapid succession two policemen followed one another on the stand. They testified that they had spent the morning trying to find the secretary, but to no avail. Before she had gone to Warren's home to work she had roomed in a house kept by an aunt. But the aunt had not seen her for several days and they had found no trace of her anywhere. She simply had walked out of Warren's yard and vanished. They told of asking the drivers of several of the bus lines if they had had the girl as a passenger. But though she was very well known in the village no one had seen her.

When they left the stand, the inquest broke down, simply for the fact there were no more witnesses to call. Warren had been killed, and it was the only fact the police could prove. But why he had been killed, or any evidence which might have thrown any light upon his death, they did not have. It had proven about as barren an inquest as I had ever attended. The only thing of interest had been the unexpected testimony regarding the secretary, and her foolish statement that Warren ought to be killed. But even that by itself was not evidence of much value.

The chief and the coroner held a long whispered conversation, during which the policeman several times shook his head. Then, gathering his papers together, the coroner arose and, going into a short account of the

murder, gave the case to the jury. They filed out through a door behind the judge's desk, a very perplexed-looking group of men, and we settled back to await their return.

We did not have a long wait. As the door closed behind the twelve men, the room had broken into excited whispers, but they died away, when within ten minutes they returned to their chairs. They wore a rather serious look, and upon the face of every man was an air of importance. Then the foreman arose and very soberly said that they agreed. In a few words he gave the only verdict which could be rendered: "Death at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

There came the scraping of feet, the pushing back of chairs and the sound of excited voices. The inquest was over.

CHAPTER VI

I HAVE AN ADVENTURE

CARTER had mentioned at lunch that after the inquest he was going to take his car and give Ranville a ride through the near-by country. As the route he had mapped out was the one I had come over the day before, I suggested it would please me just as well if they left me at the house. So, after speaking to his cook about my dinner, they drove out of the yard. I let the dog out of the garage, where he had been the entire day, and settled down on the veranda to read the New York papers which had just come.

The news of the murder of Warren must have arrived very late, for they had only a few lines about it. But then, when I thought it over, that was all the space they needed. A very few lines could tell all that was actually known of the crime. But there were long accounts of his professional career, and even a short editorial telling what a loss he would be to science. Naturally enough the question was raised, if his manuscripts were in such shape that the discoveries he had hinted he made in China could be given the world.

As I read the various articles, I saw that this one question was of the greatest interest to the public. Warren had said that he could prove for all time the question of man's origin. But what his proofs were no

one knew. As he was a real scientist he refused to say anything more until he had whipped his notes into shape for publication and could give the complete data to the world. And the three papers which I read all asked the same question. Were these notes in such condition that they could be worked up by some other man of science?

I was interrupted by the cook saying that dinner was ready, and I went into the dining room for my meal. Dinner over, I went out of the house, and for a time strolled around the grounds. They covered about an acre, and after a while I went through the opening in the hedge and into the quiet street. The road took a bend by Carter's house, and around it I saw the dark gray tower of a little church. I walked far enough to be able to have a view of it, deciding that it must be the church of which his next-door neighbor (the minister who had called the night before) had charge.

From where I stood it seemed a very pretty sort of a building, with a stone tower directly between the church and the rectory. It was not very large, nor was the tower very high. It stood back from the road, with a vivid green lawn running to the dark granite walls—a lawn with several round flower beds, a mass of color against the green. The setting of the little church was beautiful, as if some corner of England had been lifted and placed in the little New York village.

I had thought I might take a little stroll, but feeling lazy I returned to the veranda, where, for a while, I busied myself with a popular magazine. I was in the midst of an inane story when I was hailed by a voice

from the lawn, and the dog went barking down the steps.

"Say, mister, where is Mr. Carter?"

It was a boy of about fourteen who hailed me—a boy with the reddest hair I have ever seen and more freckles than any boy ought to have. He stood at the bottom of the steps looking at me with a very serious expression on his face. He seemed so disappointed when I told him Carter was away that I asked him what he wanted. For a moment or so he studied me as if to decide if I could be trusted. Then, as if reassured, he came up the steps to my side.

Giving me that searching look which all boys use in greeting people whom they do not know, he asked:

"Are you a detective like Mr. Carter?"

I assured him that I might be called something of the sort and received a rather admiring grin. Then seating himself on the top step, he patted the dog which had come to his side and said:

"You know I went down to Court to-day, and I heard Jimmy Weedon tell about seeing that boat."

I judged that Weedon must be the caretaker of Warren's grounds. In reply to my question the boy said that he was; and with a laugh added:

"Jimmy said that he never saw anybody on Mr. Warren's grounds yesterday, but I did."

I gave him one look, and he went on.

"I thought maybe Mr. Carter might like to know what I saw. I caddy for him when he plays golf. My name is George."

He seemed to be taking a good deal of time to tell

what he had seen, and I tried to hurry him up. He laughed, then said:

"Well, yesterday afternoon about five o'clock I went after berries. You don't live here, so I'll tell you where I went. I went in the fields back of Mr. Warren's house. Right back of the stone wall that goes round his place is a big swamp. 'Twas a swamp once, but it's some filled in now; and across from it are a lot of berries."

He paused to pat the Airedale, so I asked:

"Yes, I see what you mean; but what did you see?"

"Nothing much. Did not think about it till I heard those questions in Court, those questions to Jimmy Weedon about seeing any one on the grounds. Then I got to thinking about the man I saw."

As he paused for breath, I told him to go on, and he continued:

"Just about six—I know it was about six, for the whistles blew a minute or so afterwards, I saw a man climb over the wall—that stone wall of Mr. Warren's. He threw something in the bushes while he was on the wall."

"Do you know who the man was?" came my eager question.

The boy was thoughtful a moment, his face screwed up in a funny gesture. Then he shook his head saying:

"No, I don't. He looked like somebody I know; but I can't tell who he was."

"Do you know what he threw into the field?"

"Nope. I don't know he threw anything, but I saw

him throw his hand out as if he did throw something away. I think he had something in it. And then he went down round the wall, and I did not see him any more."

I quickly ran through in my mind what the boy had said. Though he might have been mistaken in thinking the man he saw climb over the wall had thrown something away, yet there was no doubt it was a valuable piece of information. It seemed to prove that some one besides the Chinaman had been on Warren's grounds about the time he must have been killed. And then I wondered if this could have been the person in the boat—that person whom no one had seen.

The boy had nothing else to tell. I gave him a dollar after impressing upon him that he must go at once to the chief of police and tell him the same story he had told me. He went away promising to do this, and I sat back to figure out his story. There was not anything suspicious, in a sense, in seeing a man climb a stone wall. But when I remembered that it took place around the time Warren had been killed, it began to look important. So far, from all the evidence we had, there did not seem to be any person who could have killed him. The secretary had come to the house at four, and Warren had not been killed until two hours later. I began to wonder who the man the boy had seen climbing the wall could have been.

It was still light, though the sun was low. As my eyes glanced lazily around, they fell upon the open door of Carter's boat house. The thought came to me, it might be worth while to take one of the boats and

row along the shore until I reached Warren's land. There would be time before dark to at least have a look at the place where the boy said he had seen the man on the wall.

I went down to the boat house and went within. There were two row boats lying in the water, and upon the concrete floor was a red canoe. As the lake was very calm, I decided the canoe would be the easiest to manage. I carried it to the water and launched it. Climbing in rather carefully, I paddled out of the spillway, and then turned up the lake.

The lake was perfectly calm, without even a ripple upon its surface. Keeping close to the shore, I paddled rather slowly, enjoying the sight of the estates which I passed. All of them had fine lawns which ran to the water's edge, with little boat houses concealed among the trees. A little way from shore several people were fishing, and as I passed a little sandy beach, I saw some children bathing.

For a short distance the shore ran in a straight line, then curved around in a half circle to the right. As I struck across to the point of land which ran out into the lake, I saw from the stone wall which came down to the water's edge that I was opposite the Warren estate. I could see above the trees the library, its red roof being the highest in sight. But there were no signs of life, and as I paddled to the shore I saw no one.

At first I had thought I would not land upon the estate, but that I would beach the canoe at the other side of the wall. But changing my mind, I landed on the shore directly in front of the library, which was

some hundred feet away upon the hill. I pulled the canoe upon the land, half hiding it behind the low-hanging branches of a willow tree. Then I started across the grass.

Passing round the front of the library, I saw that the door was shut and the blinds at the windows. I did not pause, but went down the other side of the hill, through a clump of trees, until I reached the rear wall. The wall was some hundred yards away from the library, and the boy had said that he had seen the man in a direct line with the building.

It was a granite wall almost ten feet high. I wondered a moment how I was going to get over it. A near-by tree, which had a branch hanging a few feet over the top of the wall, solved the difficulty. I climbed the tree, crept out on the branch, and dropped to the top of the wall. There I sat a moment to get my bearings.

Behind me stretched the grounds of the murdered scientist, the many trees hiding all but the top of the house. Directly back of me was the summer house, where we had found the body. But to my surprise, when I turned and looked in the other direction, I found that in front there was a slight hollow—a mass of tangled underbrush and small trees. Beyond this stretched a pasture, losing itself in the woods some little distance away. The underbrush below me ran the entire length of the wall, but stopped on my right where the wall ended. In fact here the ground rose a few feet to a grass lined meadow.

As I looked at the mass of trees and shrubs, the more

I began to wonder what any one had been doing on the wall. It was not the way to leave the grounds, for the person would have been forced to climb the smooth stones. And then there was nothing but the distant woods and the field. I wondered if the boy had been right when he said the man had thrown something away.

My eyes came again to the slight hollow below me. It was a tangled mass of shrubbery, with high grass, only hidden by the small trees which grew to the height of about eight or nine feet. To try and find anything in that tangle seemed impossible. But after a moment I dropped from the wall and started to make my way through the underbrush.

It was even worse than I had expected. The ground was soft because of a spring which must have been near by. Not only were the trees thick, but there was a tangle of wild rosebushes. Their thorns clung to me as I tried to push my way through the bushes. Long before I reached the other side I realized that it was too late to expect to make any kind of a search. It had begun to be dusk by the time I reached the wall, and when I plunged into the underbrush, the thick foliage made it impossible to see.

Floundering at every step, my clothes pulled and twisted by the thorns, and with the branches whipping across my face, I stumbled through the swamp. Luckily it was not very wet, for if it had been, I would have been unable to have gotten through. But long before I reached the more solid ground I swore at myself for what I was doing. And then, just when I began to

wonder if I would ever reach solid ground, I plunged out of the thicket into the high grass of the field. With a sigh of relief I flung myself down on the grass for breath.

My excursion had been of little value. True, I had discovered that the boy could have seen some one on the wall, for I could see its dim shape a few hundred yards away. I glanced at it a moment, then looked behind me at the distant woods, and then glanced back at the wall. And as I looked, to my great surprise I saw a figure slowly drop from the same branch I had been on. A dim, indistinct figure, which seemed to be covered with a long coat—a figure of a man who, as I looked, dropped lightly on the top of the wall.

It was now dark, but not so dark that I could not make out the man. The features I could not see, for he was too far away and the darkness too dense. But there in front of me, on the other side of the swamp, was a man—a man who remained but a moment on the wall and then dropped to the ground. For a second I lost him from sight, and then I saw the darkness split by the glare of a flashlight. Like myself, he was going into the underbrush, throwing the light carefully before him and going slowly, step by step, as if he was looking for something.

For a second I wondered what I had better do. There was no doubt he was searching for something, and searching very carefully. I could hear the sound of the underbrush as it broke under his feet. Once even I heard a muttered exclamation as the man half fell. The small trees and vines hid him from my sight,

but I could catch the circle of flame from the flashlight as he swept it to and fro. He was looking for something, but what? And then it dawned on me that the boy had been right after all. Something had been thrown from the wall into the small swamp.

There was little danger of my being seen. Not only was I in the shadow, but it was also dark. The man was about a hundred feet away, directly opposite from where I sat, crouched on the grass. He seemed to be searching over a rather small circle of ground, and evidently the search was not very successful. Then suddenly he threw the light from off the ground at his feet and directed it through the undergrowth in my direction. This caused me to move quickly a few feet to where the grass was higher.

After all there was no necessity of my moving, for in a moment the flame again swept the ground in a circle at the man's feet. Wondering what he might find, and knowing that I could not be seen from where he was, I rose and walked to the edge of the swamp, but I could see nothing there. Then, remembering that the ground rose to a pasture at my left, I carefully started in that direction. And then, after I had taken one step, my foot slipped upon a branch, and as the branch rolled over, I fell into the bushes with a crash.

I was not hurt, but at the sound of my fall the flashlight was suddenly extinguished. For a second I lay still, then, knowing there was no use to keep silent, arose. And at that second I heard the man blundering out of the underbrush, and the sound of his running

feet. Instinctively I started to run in the direction which would the soonest bring me into the open—along the edge of the swamp, up the little grassy hill, and then I paused an instant to listen.

For a moment I heard nothing, and then down below me, in the direction of the lake, I heard the sound of running feet. Whoever had been on the other side of the swamp was taking no chance of being seen. As this thought struck me, I started down the hillside for the water. The shore was not so far away, but before I reached it I heard the man half tumble into a boat, and there came the sound of oars splashing in the water.

As I reached the shore, almost crashing into the stone wall of the Warren estate, I heard the faint click of the oars as the man began to row down the lake. My canoe was on the other side of the wall. To reach it, I had to stumble as softly as I could around the wall, which stopped at the water. Lucky for me, though I had to wade, the water was not above my shoe tops, and it took only a moment to reach the canoe. I knew I had one advantage. It was almost impossible for the man to row the boat without making some sound with the oars; but I could paddle the canoe silently.

As I half fell over the canoe, I paused a second, waiting to catch the faint sound of the oars; then silently I pushed the canoe into the water, climbed in, and started to paddle as softly as possible in the direction of the boat. It was far ahead of me, and the night was so dark I could see but a few feet in front of me. But once in a while I could hear the oars click, for the

man was rowing with all his speed, evidently not knowing that I had a canoe.

It had been my idea that as I could paddle faster than he could row, I could soon reach him. My plan was to let him go ashore, and then as he stepped out of the boat, to reach his side. One thing above all I wished to do—see who it might be. After that there were a few questions I wished to ask.

But either I misjudged the distance he was ahead of me or else he could row far better than I expected. In my haste I had paddled straight out into the lake, forgetting for a moment or so that the shore took a wide curve. When I remembered that, it was to discover the man had rowed straight across this half circle, and I had to turn to the shore. This gave him several extra minutes, and though, when he ran his boat up on the shore, I was only a few feet away, yet it gave the time he needed.

He must have discovered just before he beached his boat that I was behind him. In fact I was so close that when he rose and jumped to the shore, I could partly see his figure—an indistinct mass in the darkness. He half turned, jumped from his boat, partly stumbled, only to gather himself and run away in the darkness. The next second my canoe crashed on the beach, half throwing me to my knees.

Jumping from it, I set out in the direction the man had taken. We were on some one's lawn, for I saw the figure darting ahead of me, thrown into reflection for a moment by the lights of a house. Then it went through a hedge and was lost to sight. I ran over the

grass, through the opening in the hedge, and then discovered that I was on Carter's land. As I glimpsed the running figure ahead, I heard Trouble, who was locked in the garage, give a sudden bark, and then commence to bark incessantly. I wished with all my heart the dog was loose, but there was not time to open the garage door.

When I ran around the front of Carter's house, the man was not in sight. In front of me was another hedge, to my left the lake, and to my right the lawn ran to the street. In this direction the street lights made it possible to see that there was no one there. Deciding the man had gone through the hedge, I ran down the path, and the next second was on the lawn which belonged to the minister. But I could see no one, and though there was a light in the rectory, no running figure crossed the reflection. The man was gone, but where?

I stopped running, to walk up the slight incline which led to the church. Frankly I was puzzled. There had not been time for him to have gone very far. The street lights gave enough illumination to at least have allowed me to have seen if any running figure was ahead of me. But no one was in sight.

Puzzled, I went rather slowly across the grass and came to the dark shadow made by the wall of the church. As I stood silent a moment, I cast my eyes at the dense mass of the tower, which divided the rectory from the church proper. It was not a very high tower, and its top was only a few feet above the roof of the church. Then I went toward the street, keeping in the

shadow, and when I reached the tower itself, found to my surprise that the door at the foot was open.

I peered within, only to have my eyes met by the blackness. Finding a match, I struck it. For the shortest space of time the darkness was lighted sufficiently for me to see a very narrow winding pair of stairs which were lost to sight above my head. Before the match was out I had time to see an iron railing which ran along the side of the steps. As darkness came again, I once more wondered what had happened to the man. There seemed no chance now of finding him, for by this time he must have been far away.

And then, for some unknown reason, I decided to climb the stairs in the tower and see if I could perceive anything from the roof. Thinking it over later, I saw how absurd the idea must have been, for the night was dark and even if I reached the roof, I would not have been able to see very far. But at the time the only thing I remembered was that when I had looked at the tower late in the afternoon I had noticed an iron railing which ran around its top.

I reached in my pocket for another match, and then discovered I had just struck the last one. A search of all my pockets gave no results. Hesitating a moment, I finally stepped through the open door, groping my way until my foot plunged against the stone stairs. Then finding the railing, I began slowly to climb the steps.

The darkness was intense, and the stairway was not only very narrow, but it wound around and around in a bewildering manner. I groped my way from step to

step, my hand firmly grasping the rail. Just about the time I began to wonder if the steps would never end I came out in a small room at the top of the tower. Directly in front of me was an open door, and as my eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, I saw that it led to the platform.

When I went through this door, I found myself on a little balcony, which ran around the top of the tower. In my first quick glance I saw below me the lights of the town, and, turning my head, I caught the reflection of the village streets far away in the distance. I leaned over the iron railing, saw the dark shadow of the roof a few feet below me, and began to wonder why under heaven I had ever climbed the steps.

After walking completely around the balcony, I came back to my place near the open door. Though I had peered over the edge on all sides, I had seen nothing. Only the lights of the town, the street lamps and the reflections from the houses had broken the blackness. I had just about made up my mind to descend when a sudden sound behind me caused me to stiffen to attention. It was only a slight sound, and what it was I could not tell. But as I started to turn, suddenly from behind I felt something move, and the next moment two hands suddenly gripped my body.

The attack was so sudden and unexpected that, taken off my guard as I was, I did not move until the man had secured my arms with a firm grip. I tried to throw them aside, but I might just as well have tried to break a steel rope. Whoever it was had terrific strength, for they held me in such a position that I was unable

to move. Throwing my body to this side and that, I tried to break the grip, but it was impossible. And silently, save only for the man's quick breathing, I was being borne to the iron rail.

The man had seized me from the rear, and as I was unable to turn I could not see him. Even if I had been able to turn, I could not have distinguished him, for the night was too dark. Silently, without a word, he pushed me against the rail. Then as its iron began to cut into my back, he tried to lift me from the platform. In horror it came over me that he was trying to throw me from the tower.

With a sudden burst of strength I managed to free myself from one of the clutching hands and half turned. But the effort was in vain. Again the arms closed around me, and as I slipped on the stone floor, I felt myself being raised and the iron rail pressing against my back. I tried to regain my feet—tried to throw off the clutching hands, but could not; and then, as if my weight was of no avail, the man lifted me slowly but surely until my feet were off the floor. Then he gave a sudden push, and with a cry I went off the platform.

CHAPTER VII

"THE CHIEF AND I—MAKE A CALL"

It is said that a person drowning has all the events of his life pass before him. I do not know if that is true or not; but in the brief second in which I was falling through space I had but one thought—how foolish I had been to have ever climbed those tower stairs. The thought must have come and gone in a mere flash of time, but it seemed long enough for me to reflect over. Then, with a crash and a jar which seemed to shake every bone in my body, I struck the roof. Struck the roof and started to roll down its side.

Luckily, there was not a very steep pitch to the roof, and I managed to stop my slide just as I reached the eaves. Aching in every part of my body, I pulled myself into a sitting position and gave a cautious look around. Above me was the tower, and I thanked my stars that the height was only about six feet. If I had fallen several feet from where I did, I would not have stopped until I reached the ground. And there is no doubt I would have been killed. As it was, it seemed a miracle that I had not broken any bones. For though I was pretty sore from the fall, I decided there was nothing else the matter.

But my position was far from enviable. I was sitting on the very edge of the roof between the church and

the rectory, about thirty feet from the ground. The pitch of the roof was not so steep but what I could climb it, but that would do me no particular good. Above me was the roof of the house, and I remembered that I had seen a light in the rectory as I came across the lawn. There must be some sort of an arrangement to reach the roof through the rectory attic. I decided to try and find it.

Carefully I edged myself along and began to climb over the smooth expanse of the rectory shingles. Though they were slippery, yet the pitch was the same as that of the church, and I had no difficulty. Half-way up the roof I found what I had expected—an opening into the attic. But when I had seated myself on the wooden hatch, I was no better off than before. It was locked, and I was unable to open it.

Sitting there for a few moments, I tried to puzzle out what I should do next. I did not intend to spend the night on the roof if I could help it, and yet there did not seem to be any way down to the ground. Then I began to bang on the covered opening—banging with my feet, pounding and pounding. I would do this for a moment, then wait, only to bang again. Just as I was about ready to give up hope I heard footsteps in the attic, and a very surprised voice cried in a muffled tone:

“What’s that?”

I yelled out that I was on the roof and climbed off the cover of the trap door. In a moment it was slowly lifted, and, looking through the opening, I saw the rather startled face of the minister. I drew myself to

the edge and dropped at his surprised feet on the attic floor. As I straightened up, I saw his eyes sweep over me, and they grew very wide as he gasped:

"Good heavens! it's Mr. Pelt."

I must have been a rather sorry-looking object. The branches of the trees through which I had pushed my way while in the swamp had torn my clothes. One leg of my trousers flapped to and fro as I moved. I was covered with dirt, while my shoes were a mass of mud. My face, which his eyes gazed upon in amazement, must have been a sight, for after one look he exclaimed:

"What has happened to you, Mr. Pelt? And—and, why were you on my roof?"

I started to explain, when, remembering his duties, he begged me to come down in his library. I followed him down the attic steps to the first floor, where we went into a room lined with books. He motioned to a chair, excused himself and left the room. In a moment he returned, bringing with him a bottle and a glass. As he poured out the wine, he said he thought I needed it, and then, dropping into a chair, watched me while I drank.

His eyes were very curious, yet he was too well bred to ask me what had happened. Placing the glass on the near-by table, I told him briefly of what had taken place. My visit to the swamp I passed over lightly, but did tell of seeing a man run through Carter's hedge, and how I had followed him. As I told of the sudden attack upon the roof of his tower, and how I was thrown over the side, he gave a gesture of horror.

"Heavens, man!" he said, "some one tried to kill you."

I agreed to this, and there fell a silence. He broke it to say that there was nothing unusual in the door of the tower being open. In fact it was never locked, the village people using it for a place from which to give their visitors a view of the lake. But to hear that which had happened to me should have taken place upon his property shocked him. His dark eyes never left my face as he expressed again and again his horror. I could see that from his point of view the whole thing was unexplainable.

He told me he had been reading, and he pointed out where he had thrown his book when he heard the sound of my pounding on the roof. He half laughed as he said that for a moment he was a very astonished man. He could hear some kind of a banging overhead, and at last went up the steps to the attic. There he was startled to discover that the sound came from the roof. When he heard my voice, he thought for a moment the boys of the village were playing some sort of a prank.

The clock suddenly striking eleven roused me to the lateness of the hour. With a little exclamation of pain at the stiffness of my muscles I rose to my feet saying that I had better be going. He went with me to the door, then out upon the lawn. There we both turned and looked at the tower, which loomed above our heads. Saying "good night," I went rather slowly across the grass, through the opening in the hedge, and over Carter's lawn.

The large living room was a blaze of light, and I went up the steps and into the house. Carter and Ranville were sitting in two large chairs talking very earnestly. It was the Englishman who saw me first, and I half laughed as I saw his eyes sweep over my disheveled figure and his jaw drop. Catching Ranville's expression, Carter turned to see what he was looking at. Giving me one amazed look, he rose to his feet and came over in my direction.

"In the name of God, Pelt, what have you been doing?" was his shocked question.

I dropped into a chair and told him a drink of Scotch would be very agreeable. With one look at my face he hurried out of the room. In a second he returned with a bottle and, placing it on a stand, took three glasses from his pocket. Ranville's eyes wore a questioning look, but he made no inquiries until I had finished my drink. Even then it was Carter who broke out:

"What happened, Pelt."

Going into a long account of my experiences, I told them of the visit of the boy and my trip to the swamp. They said nothing until I spoke of the attack which had been made on me in the tower, and how the man had tried to throw me off the top. Here Ranville broke in to say dryly that from my looks he judged the man had succeeded. I nodded, and then told how I had struck the roof, and that the minister had let me into his house through the opening in his attic.

When I had finished, Carter was silent a moment, then jumped to his feet and left the room. Ranville

poured me out another drink, took a small one for himself and said:

"You struck something to-night, Pelt, but what it was I would give a good deal to know."

Shaking my head, I sank back in the chair. All at once I realized how tired I was, and that I was terribly sore. Every bone in my body seemed to be aching, and each time I moved I found a new sore spot. My eyes fell on my suit—stained by the grass and smeared with dirt. But for the time being I was too tired to go to my room and change.

When Carter returned, he came to my side and said:

"I just got hold of the chief, Pelt. It struck me that if there is anything in the swamp, the chief better see that no one gets it before the police do. I told him what the boy said to you—how he saw some one throw something away. He says that he has not been to the station to-night, and so does not know if the boy went down, as you told him to."

He paused and went on. "I told him just a wee bit about what you saw, suggesting he have a couple of men by the swamp to-night in case the man goes back. He is going to do that."

He gave me another look, and at my expression half laughed. Then he said:

"What you need, Pelt, is a warm bath and a good night's rest. You are pretty lucky not to have been killed; and after this we'd better not let you go around alone."

His suggestion of a bath was a good one, and they followed me to my room and bade me good night.

After I had turned on the water in the tub I glanced at myself in the wall mirror. I was a sorry object, and when I saw my face, I could not blame Carter for smiling. There was a great streak of dirt across my cheek, and a large bruise over one eye; my hair was a tangled mass. When I turned away from the glass, I remembered my hat was still on the roof of the church.

I looked myself over pretty well after I undressed and decided that, save for several bruises, I was unharmed. True, I was very sore, but the warm water would aid that. After staying in the water for a long while, I rubbed myself well with alcohol, and crept between the sheets of the bed. I gave a sigh of contentment as my tired body felt the cool linen. For a while I tried to puzzle out all that had taken place—tried, only to give it up as sleep crept down upon me. Then with a sigh I turned over and knew no more.

It was long after ten when I went down to the dining room the next morning. As I took my place at the breakfast table, the housekeeper handed me a note saying that Carter had left it. It simply announced that both he and Ranville had gone to Warren's funeral, and they thought they would let me sleep. Breakfast over, I strolled out on the lawn and for a while amused myself by playing ball with the dog. Tiring of this after a while, I went up on the veranda to read a magazine.

I had been reading perhaps about ten minutes when I was hailed by a voice from the walk and, glancing down, I saw the heavy, thick-set figure of the chief of police. He came up the steps and dropped into a near-

by chair, wiping his face with his handkerchief as if he was warm. Under one arm he had a small package which he was handling very carefully. For a while we talked in a general way, until I began to wonder what it might be that had caused him to come to the house.

At length, after taking a pipe from his pocket and which he took some time in filling, he said:

"Well, Mr. Pelt, I understand that you are with one of the best detectives in the country."

I agreed to this, and he went on:

"I have something here might interest you."

He took the package from under his arm and slowly but very carefully unwrapped it. There seemed to be far more paper used in wrapping than was necessary, but at length he reached the object he was after. Giving it one rather strange look, he handed it to me without a word. It was a dagger of a style and workmanship which I had never seen before. The blade was very long and extremely thin, and it came to a decidedly sharp point—a point which not only was sharp, but also very clean; the steel of which it was made was glazed a dark green, and the handle had several figures carved upon it.

After I had looked it over I gave him a questioning glance. His response was quick:

"After Mr. Carter called me last night I sent two men round to Warren's. Had them watch that swamp all night. They saw no one. This morning I got a lot of boys and set them to work. They went all over the place—that's what they found," and he waved one hand at the dagger.

I cast another glance at the dagger, wondering if it could have been the thing the boy said he saw the man on the wall throwing away. As if reading my thoughts, the chief said:

"The doc saw this awhile ago. He thinks it's the knife that did the killing."

Realizing that the chief did not know all of my adventure of the night before, I told him of what had taken place. He seemed very startled, but then I knew that the murder itself had been a bit more than he was accustomed to. He listened, however, without a word, though he did slowly shake his head when I told of seeing the man who was searching in the swamp. But when I mentioned of being thrown from the tower of the church, he gave a sudden start. As I ended, he said quickly:

"You know, Mr. Pelt, this murder, of course, upsets me. We don't have many crimes that amount to anything here. My work is mostly small stuff. But this murder sort of gets me. To start with, Warren was the biggest man in this place. I can't for the life of me think of any reason why any one should bump him off."

I made no reply to this, studying the man before me. There was something likable about the chief—something about the humorous smile he had that caused me to warm to him. But his face was puzzled, and it was clear to see he was, as he put it, upset. I could readily understand that the murder of the most important man in his town would cause him to realize the responsibilities resting upon his shoulders. Our

eyes suddenly met and, throwing out his hands in a gesture of appeal, he said: "You know, Mr. Pelt, this murder is a little too deep for me. I wish you could see your way clear to help me a bit."

I assured him I would be glad to do anything within my power, but warned him that most of the work upon criminal cases which I had been in had been done by Bartley. He listened with a serious air, and when I finished remarked:

"That's all right; but you can help me, I know. Now I have been thinking. You heard what Warren's housekeeper said yesterday about that girl. How she said he ought to be killed."

He paused as if refreshing his memory, then burst forth:

"That's a hell of a thing for a nice girl to say. But the thing I have got to do now is to find her. I had two of the cops out, but they can't find any one who has even seen her. Now I was thinking, perhaps you would go with me to see her aunt. She ought to know something about the girl. One of the boys asked the aunt last night if she knew where she was, and she said, 'No.' But she might give us some idea. What do you say?"

There was an appealing look on his face as he glanced at me, and I was willing to agree that the aunt should be questioned. Upon asking him when he wanted to go, he said: "At once," and I told him that if he would wait until I found my hat, I would go with him. The hat found, we went down the steps, and he

started for the road, saying that his Ford was standing there. I told him I thought we might go in more comfort in my car and, going to the garage, drove it out to the road. The Airedale jumped into the seat as I stopped for the chief, and as there was plenty of room, I let him stay.

It took us at least fifteen minutes to reach the house before which we stopped. It was a small white place set far back from the street, with a white fence before it. The path we went up was lined with flowers, and roses climbed over the doorway of the house. It was a very pleasant old lady who answered our ringing of the bell—an old lady whose smile turned into an anxious look as she perceived the chief.

She led us into an old-fashioned parlor of the sort I had not seen for years. The haircloth furniture was of a beautiful design, and the old prints upon the wall took me back to my boyhood days in New England. Motioning us to a chair, she seated herself, with a very anxious look upon her face. Then, without waiting for the chief to tell his errand, she asked in a trembling voice:

"I hope you have not heard anything bad about Florence?"

The chief shook his head. "No, Mrs. West," he replied. "I don't know anything bad about her. But I wanted to ask you some questions. You see we don't know where Florence is, and so far I can't find any one who does. Now, did she come to your house yesterday afternoon?"

The woman was rocking back and forth in her chair. When she answered, I could tell she was worried.

"No," came the reply. "I have not seen her for several days. You know when she got that position with Mr. Warren, she had to stay at his house. She said he often had her work at night, and it was too far to come back here. She did run in every day or so, but I have not seen her for at least three days. And then—" she paused as if shocked by what she was going to add, then said: "And then I heard about her saying that Mr. Warren ought to be killed."

The face of the old lady was flushed, but the expression was more one of perplexity than anything else. Her eyes did not leave the chief's face.

"You know, of course, that, though Florence was a very impulsive girl, she was a good girl," she added proudly.

The chief nodded, and the aunt continued:

"Now I thought Florence just said that—that about Mr. Warren being killed, because she was mad over something. She would not have meant it, would she?"

Her eyes met the chief's imploringly. He shifted his heavy weight and then with a sheepish expression remarked: "No—but then, Mrs. West, why did she take her suit case and say she was not coming back? Where did she go? That's what I want to know."

To this the woman could give no reply. There was no doubt she was very much puzzled over what had happened to her niece. But at the same time she was sure the girl was all right. As to any place that she might have gone, she did not know. She added that

her niece was a girl who did not go out, as she put it, very much, and that she had no idea where she might be.

We were just on the verge of leaving when I asked her if she knew of any young man she went around with. Her reply was that Florence did not care much for young men; but in a moment she mentioned a Robert Hunt with whom she once in a while went to dances. At the name I shot a glance at the chief to see if he knew the man.

He nodded. "I know him. That's the young man who is studying law in Judge Thompson's law office. A fine young fellow."

The aunt informed us that occasionally the young man came to the house to see Florence and took her to dances. But he seemed to be the only young man with whom the girl had anything to do, for the old lady could not think of any other person the girl had been interested in, and with this we left.

I dropped the chief in front of Carter's. Leaving the car in the drive, I went into the house to be greeted by the two men with the news that lunch was ready. As we went into the dining room, they asked me how I felt after my night's escapade, and grinned a little when I told them I was a little sore. Then as we seated ourselves at the table, I told them of the visit of the chief and of the finding of the dagger. They made hardly any comment, though Ranville said he wanted to have a look at the weapon.

During the lunch they told me about the funeral. Not only had it been largely attended, but there had

never been so many famous men in the village before. From the various colleges there had come the scientists to pay their last respects to the famous man who had worked with them. And then, after mentioning the names of some who had been at the funeral—names known the world over in intellectual circles—Ranville said:

“You know, Pelt, we wondered what would be done with the notes of Warren’s trip, and how the world had been waiting for his account of his discoveries. We mentioned that the book must be finished. Well, we heard this morning that Niles Patton, who was with him on the trip, will finish the book.”

I turned to Carter, asking him if he knew Patton, only to be told that he knew him very well. He was a young assistant professor at Harvard, working under Warren in anthropology, and had been with him in China. And then Carter said that Patton would take up his task at once, and would be at work in the Warren library to-morrow.

Lunch was almost over, and we were just drinking our coffee when there came the sound of the door bell and the loud barking of the dog upon the lawn. The housekeeper passed through the room to the door, and in a moment returned. As she stood by Carter’s side, he asked:

“Who is it, Mrs. Hart?”

She shook her head saying: “I don’t know, Mr. Carter. The man says he must see you. I never saw him before.” She paused a second, then finished: “It’s a Chinaman.”

CHAPTER VIII

WE HAVE A VISITOR—AND—I TAKE A RIDE

FOR a moment no one spoke. As our eyes met, the look we gave each other was a wondering one. I saw a half smile play around Ranville's lips, and then Carter rose and started for the living room, we after him. The same thought must have been in the minds of each of us. Was this man at the door the Chinaman Warren's housekeeper had said came to the door around the time he was killed?

The housekeeper had gone to the front door again, and by the time we reached the living room was ushering the man into our presence. He was the tallest man of his race I have seen, with a well-developed body and a very lean face. He was wearing a white silk suit, and as he came across the room to our side, bore himself with easy grace. His cold black eyes swept over the three of us, and then in the most perfect English and in a very cultured voice he asked:

"And which is Mr. Carter?"

Carter replied, and the man half smiled—a smile which lit up his yellow face. Then he said:

"No doubt you do not know me, Mr. Carter, but you have been pointed out to me in Washington. My name is Lee Kong, and I have at times been connected with our London Embassy."

The English was perfect, and there was no doubt he was one of those well-educated Chinamen which one meets so often in the various capitals of the world. His general air was that of breeding and of culture, and one could feel back of it all the many thousand years of racial blood. Carter introduced us and motioned to a chair. After seating himself the man said:

"I saw your name in the paper, Mr. Carter. And I thought that perhaps you might be the best man to whom to tell my story."

Carter took his cigar case and offered it to him, but he begged to be excused. Taking a gold case from his pocket, he lighted a long, straw-colored cigarette and leaned back in his chair. His shrewd eyes took us all in, and then with a little laugh he leaned forward to say:

"Perhaps I had better tell you just who I am. I have been connected with both our London and Washington Embassies. I knew Dr. Warren very well. It is in regard to my visit to his house yesterday that I wish to speak. You know, of course, I was there."

I was rather surprised at the cool manner in which the oriental admitted he was the man the housekeeper had seen. Carter replied he knew some one of his race had been there, but that was all. Over the yellow face came a half smile, and then the words:

"Yes, I was the man. I knew inquiries would be made, and thought I had better tell my story to some one who could understand. I have been staying at Cooperstown. When I read in the papers about the

inquest, I saw your name, and I decided you were the person to see."

There was an air of sureness about the man which was annoying. That the police were very keen to question him did not seem to enter his head, or if it did, he was not interested. I believed he was the last and, for that matter, the only person who had seen Warren around the time of his death. As I looked at the impassive, yellow face, with the cold, black eyes, I wondered if he held the solution of the mystery. As if reading my thoughts, his suave glance met mine, and he said:

"I can assure you I did not kill Mr. Warren. He was dead when I went into his library."

We gave a start, but the face of the man did not change a particle. Coolly, he repeated the statement: "He was dead when I saw him."

Slowly lighting another of his thin yellow cigarettes, he carefully inhaled the smoke, then added:

"Mr. Warren, as you know, spent two years in the heart of my country. In fact, I aided him in some of his arrangements before he started. China, like all other nations, has citizens who are not law-abiding. You may remember that when Mr. Warren did not return at the expected time, it was said he had been killed by outlaws. That, of course, was but a rumor. He returned safely, but his leaving China made some little comment among our people."

He paused, then continued: "You perhaps know the story of Buddha's death—how his body was burnt, the ashes placed in seven boxes and buried in seven places."

As I looked at him, I wondered what he was driving at, but he went on:

"Of course, many of the Christian missionaries have said that the story was a myth." A little smile passed over his lips and, shrugging his shoulders, he continued:

"Just what the missionaries tell their converts now I cannot say; but only a few years ago there was discovered not only one of the shrines of Buddha in India, but they found one of the boxes with his ashes. That is now a matter of history."

He glanced at our interested faces, and then said half apologetically:

"You, perhaps, wonder what this has to do with Warren. I will tell you. Buddhism is not the religion of China, though there are a good many Buddhists. But tradition has said that in one of our temples far out in the desert, there was a shrine which contained the ashes of the great teacher. Three years ago outlaws ravaged the temple, and among their spoils was the box which our tradition said contained the ashes of the Blessed One."

He paused to light another cigarette, and then came his smooth voice:

"To get at the heart of the matter, that box in some manner fell into Warren's hands. I had been in correspondence with him for several months asking him to return it to me. It was of no value to him, and it did mean a good deal to some of my countrymen. He was willing to give it up, and it was for that purpose I came to his house two days ago."

"And you found him dead?" came Carter's question.

The dark head bowed, repeating slowly: "I found him dead."

He threw out his hands in a gesture of resignation.

"His soul had joined his ancestors." He paused, then went on rather quickly:

"I went up the path as the servant directed me. The library door was open, and after knocking several times I took the liberty of entering. Mr. Warren was lying back of his desk upon the floor; there was a knife protruding from his chest."

"You say that the knife was in his body?" came Carter's startled voice.

As if surprised at his tone, the Chinaman studied him coolly. "Yes. You seem surprised."

Carter made no reply to the question, but asked him if he had seen any one, and if he closed the door after he left. To both he answered: "No"; then seeing our amazed faces, he added:

"You perhaps wonder why I did not report his death to the police."

He was silent a moment, studying the gloss of his nails; then, raising his head, he said:

"That, of course, was not my affair. Then again I failed to see why I should become—what is it you say—mixed up in a violent death. I had nothing to do with it, and it was not my affair in the least."

He paused and there fell a silence—a silence broken by Ranville speaking for the first time:

"You wrote to Mr. Warren, you say—telling him you were to visit him?"

The yellow figure in the chair slightly inclined his head in assent. Then Ranville asked:

"Did you type your letter?"

The voice was cold as the oriental replied:

"As it was a personal letter, naturally I did him the courtesy of writing it with my own hand."

Again silence, in which I wondered what might be in the brain of the inscrutable figure in the chair. His eyes went over the three of us, and I thought I saw a little show of contempt in the glance. It was Carter who broke the silence—a silence which was becoming awkward.

"Did you find the box?"

The man rose, and once more I thought that he was the tallest man of his race I had ever seen. As he bent to take his hat in his hand, I noticed how long his fingers were and how flexible they appeared. Then as he straightened up, he answered the question:

"No, I did not find it. If I had, I would have taken it with me. I left everything as it was and departed. The door was still open when I went away."

He turned as if he thought the interview was over. Behind the man's back Ranville's eyes met Carter's, and there was a little amused look in them. He reached the door before Carter spoke:

"Will you go with me and tell your story to the chief of police?"

The man turned quickly. There seemed to be a surprised tone in his voice as he replied:

"The police? Why, no, why should I bother with them. You can tell them what I have said."

He smiled and added sarcastically: "They can find me. I am in Cooperstown—at the Inn." Then bowing very low, he begged us not to go to the door, and went out into the air.

For a moment after his steps died away no one spoke. The man had gone as quietly as he had arrived. His story, to say the least, was odd. Then, with a decided shake of his head, Carter burst forth:

"Well, what do you think of that yarn? For my part I don't believe it."

"It is pretty hard to say, Carter," Ranville laughed in reply. "I have had a good deal of experience with the Chinese, and it has been my idea that it is almost impossible to say what goes on back of their almond-shaped eyes. Yet he may have told the truth, at that."

"I don't believe it," was Carter's energetic protest. "That Chinaman was about as smooth an article as I have ever seen. It's my idea he knew it was only a question of a day or so before he would have been traced. That's why he came around and told that yarn. There is no way of saying it is not so; his word is as good as ours."

He brought his fist down on the arm of his chair, then added: "But there is one thing I can do. I will wire my chief in Washington and get all the information there is about him. If he has been around the Embassy, the chief will have the dope on him."

"His story of Warren being dead, with the knife still in the body and the door open, makes the affair look a bit different than what we found," I commented.

Ranville carefully lighted a cigar, watched the first smoke ring circle above his head, and then said:

"If we presume that his story is true, it opens up several interesting theories. Who took the knife from the body? Who closed the door?" and he paused.

"And who killed him?" broke in Carter's disgusted voice.

Rising to his feet, he stood before our chairs, his hands in his pocket, and said earnestly:

"There's that story of his about the box with the ashes of Buddha in it. There were a number of boxes in the room. Who knows if he did not take it? For that matter, who can tell if anything was taken from Warren's library? We won't get very far as to discovering why Warren was killed until we find a motive of some sort. At present there is no one who can tell us if anything was taken from the library. No one knows anything about its contents anyway."

"Only the secretary," was Ranville's dry comment, "and no one knows where she is."

As they both looked at me, I told them of my visit to the girl's aunt, and of what the woman had said. They listened until I was through, and then said that the most important thing the chief had to do was to find the secretary. Not only would she have to explain her statement, that Warren ought to be killed, but there was something else she could do. As she had worked with Mr. Warren, she must be familiar with the contents of his library. She alone could tell us if anything was missing. Until we knew that fact there was little we could go on.

We discussed this for a while, and in the midst of our talk the telephone rang. Carter went out into the hall to answer it. He returned in a moment to tell me I was wanted on the phone. Taking the receiver, I found the chief of police on the other end of the wire. He had received—as he put it—a good tip as to where the missing secretary was. He mentioned that it was about twenty miles away, over the mountains, and asked if I would be willing to take my car and go with him. I told him I would be at the station in a few moments and rang off.

Returning to the living room, I told them what the chief had said, and Carter tried to figure out where we might be going. He said there were any number of small lakes in the near-by mountains which were as inaccessible as though they were hundreds of miles away. Some of these lakes were camping spots, and many of them did not have even a telephone. He followed me out to the car to remind me that it might not be a bad idea for me to take my chains along. Then as he wished me good-by, I drove out of the yard.

The police station was a small squatty brick building, set directly back of a white church. I stopped at the curb and, climbing down, went through the open door into the large room within. Behind a desk, with his feet higher than his head, was a policeman reading a newspaper. He dropped the paper long enough to ask me what I wanted. At my request for the chief, he motioned to a door at the left and then went back to his reading. Walking across the floor, I pushed open the door and passed into the next room.

Evidently it was the private office of the chief. A small room with two chairs and a desk for furniture. Upon the walls were several gaudy calendars and two or three placards announcing a reward for various wanted men. At the desk, busily engaged in looking over a large scale map, was the chief. He motioned to the other chair, and as I pulled it up to the desk, he started to thank me for my willingness to go with him.

As my eyes dropped to the map, he saw my glance and, pushing back his chair, said:

"Well, I think maybe I have got hold of a good tip about that girl. I got hold of the young law student she goes around with. He said that he saw her about half-past four the afternoon of the murder."

"He did!" was my comment.

"Yep, he did," was the retort. "And he saw her again at five. She was climbing into the old Ford which belongs to the camp at Lake Pleasant. That's a small girls' camp over Bald Mountain. It's twenty-five miles from here, and about as bad a road as you can find. Once a week the Ford comes into town for provisions and the mail."

A twenty-five-mile ride over a bad road did not appear very pleasing. I asked the chief why he did not telephone and see if the girl was there.

"For the simple reason there is no telephone in camp. The nearest one is over five miles away, on the side of another hill. Besides I had an idea it might be best to see the girl ourselves. The young man said she was in the Ford when it went out of town. And if she was, then she must be at the camp."

I agreed it might be best to see the girl ourselves, and in a short time we went out to the car. I stopped at a filling station to make sure the tank was full and that I had enough oil. Then we headed for the hills, which were but a few miles away. For a while we drove on a fine state highway, with summer estates and small farms for company. But after we had gone a few miles we turned off the main road to follow a narrow, dirt highway—a road which grew narrower as we went along—with a brook by the side, which was running swiftly down to the lake.

Not only was the road narrow, but it was in horrible condition. Deep ruts ran along its sides and across its surface. The scenery became more desolate, and the farms fewer. In a short while the pasture land vanished, and on each side of us were deep woods. The road began to climb, growing steeper with every foot, and soon I was forced to put the car into second gear. Though it was a very well-built machine, yet we bounded from side to side upon the seat. Once as we struck an extra deep rut, I heard the chief mutter an oath as he came down against the side of the car.

We reached the top of the mountain at last, and found that there was a clear space ahead of us. We could look far down into the valley below and across to another range of hills. A wild country useless for farming, and without a house in sight. But as I swept around a bend in the road, I saw far below me the shining waters of several small lakes. One of these the chief pointed out as being our destination.

If anything, the descent of the hill was even worse

than coming up. I could well see why those who camped in the valley did not make many trips to town. The road became so narrow that there was not room for two cars to pass, and I wondered at times if I could keep on it. Not only that, but it suddenly started to sweep around abrupt heights, in sharp, sudden curves—curves which took all one's skill to make. It was with a little sigh of relief that I came off the mountain and began to follow the road which ran through two rows of trees.

Suddenly we came out of the wood, to find ourselves by the shore of a small lake—a lake which formed almost a complete glimmering circle, with trees coming down to the water's edge. The road followed the shore of the lake for a few hundred yards, then took an abrupt bend, to again come back to the water. And then, as we came around the bend, I saw three small buildings ahead of us—buildings placed in a cleared spot of ground, and with a little wharf in front which ran into the lake. And it was here we stopped.

The buildings were the sort of summer cottages that one finds so often, built more for cheapness than for looks or even comfort. But when we climbed out of the car and went across the high grass, we found that there was no one at home. The cottages were occupied, for the doors were not locked. Hammocks were swung under the trees, and on the verandas were chairs with magazines flung upon them. But there was no one at home; and when we went down to the wharf, we found the boats were not in. Evidently we would have to wait until they returned.

We seated ourselves upon the edge of the wharf and let our legs dangle over the water. Lighting my cigar as the chief lighted his pipe, I gazed at the scene before. On all sides the woods circled the lake, the trees green and restful to the eyes. Above in a blue sky little fleecy clouds floated by, only to be reflected in the darker blue of the lake. And on every side were the hills, with the lake below, like the bottom to a cup.

For a while we sat there, and the chief told me the camp was run by one of the churches in the village. But after a time conversation ceased, and we sat and smoked, dreaming in the sunlight. Once in a while a fish would jump from the water—a gleaming mass of silver—and fall back with a splash; then would come the scream of a bird far down the lake. But save for these, the air was very still. And just as I was beginning to grow sleepy, the chief cried, pointing down the lake:

“I guess they are coming.”

I gazed in the direction he pointed and saw three small boats far down the lake. They were moving very slowly, but once in a while I could catch the echo of laughter. We watched them approach nearer, until the people in the boats could be seen—a number of girls in bathing suits, girls laughing and talking.

They had almost reached the dock before they saw us and for a moment their voices suddenly ceased. Then, recognizing the chief, they waved their hands at him. In a moment the row boats were by the dock, and I started to offer to aid them with their ropes; but instead of tying to the dock they ran their boats upon

the shore and soon ten girls in bathing suits came running down the planks of the wharf. I could tell they were curious and that the presence of the chief puzzled them.

From out of the ten figures there stepped a girl who evidently had been in the water only a few moments before. Her one-piece suit clung to the perfect figure, and I noticed that her shapely legs were whiter than the other girls, as though she had not been in the sun very long. Her face was keen, and her laughing eyes turned upon the chief. She advanced almost in front of him and in a laughing voice said:

"Did you come after me, chief?"

The chief rose slowly to his feet and his face was serious as he turned and faced the girl. As their eyes met something about his expression drove the laughter from her face and her cheeks flushed. For a moment they stood there, their eyes meeting, and then the chief said very simply:

"I am afraid I did, Miss Harlan."

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH BARTLEY ARRIVES

THE girl's question had been asked in a laughing voice and her eyes had danced as she spoke to the chief. But the rather curt reply of the police officer and the tone of seriousness in his voice caused the smile to slowly fade from her face. For a moment she looked at him, and then in a trembling voice asked:

"Why—what is the matter?"

The other girls had crowded around. Their eyes were bright with wonder, curious to know what was the trouble. The chief gave them an uncertain look, then said that there was not much the matter, but he wished to speak to the secretary alone. Reluctantly they started toward the cottages, casting back many wondering glances. As they reached the piazza of the central cottage they broke into excited conversation.

He turned to the secretary, who stood, with a grave face, in front of him. Just what was in his mind regarding the girl would have been rather hard to say. But I knew he was remembering the statement of the housekeeper—that she had said Warren ought to be killed. Yet, as I looked at the beautiful girl before us, with the bathing suit showing every line of her figure, I decided that though she might have made the statement it had meant nothing. Her face was frank and the gaze which she gave us both was fearless.

"Florence," said the chief slowly, "Mr. Warren was found dead the evening you left."

Her eyes opened wide in astonishment and she gasped:

"Dead?"

He nodded gravely, then added: "Worse—murdered."

The girl's face whitened, and then slowly the color flushed back into her cheeks until they were a vivid red. For a moment she looked at us as if not believing what had been said. Then slowly she went to a near-by box and sank down upon it. There was no doubt she was surprised and also horrified at the news she had heard.

As she did not speak, the chief nervously shifted his weight and threw a puzzled glance in my direction. Purposely I turned my eyes away, and in a moment, in an embarrassed voice, he said:

"You see, Florence, it's a bit awkward. You went away from Mr. Warren's very suddenly."

For the first time the girl showed a bit of temper, as though it had just dawned upon her that the chief would not have taken the long trip from the village just to tell her Mr. Warren was dead. She spoke in a voice a little nervous and at the same time sharp.

"Well, suppose I did; that's my business, is it not?"

The chief shook his head. "I am afraid not," was the slow response. "In a sense it's mine—now. You see the remark you made to Mr. Warren's housekeeper made it necessary to find you."

She looked at him as if not understanding and then half stammered: "What remark?"

"That Mr. Warren ought to be killed," was the cold reply.

As if realizing the seriousness of the chief's tone, the girl's face went very white. Slowly her fingers opened and closed; her eyes studied the water for a moment as if she was trying to fix in her mind the distant shore. Then she slowly raised her head and in a look which included us both said:

"I did say that. But it was a very silly thing to say and it meant nothing. Mr. Warren was alive when I left him and, of course, I know nothing about his death."

As the girl hesitated, the chief broke in:

"I am not saying you did know anything about his death. I only want to make you see how you placed yourself in a bad position by going away and by the remark you made. Why did you say it?"

The secretary gave a half laugh, though there was a tone of disgust in it.

"It's all very simple. Mr. Warren was a very hard man to work with. He was rushing his book and I was working from ten to twelve hours a day. He paid pretty well, of course, but once in a while he would get mad and then he would sure bawl me out. The afternoon I left we had a little disagreement."

"What over?" was my question.

The girl gave me a surprised look. Remembering that he had not given my name, the chief introduced me as a friend of Carter's. Then the secretary replied:

"Two things. Mr. Warren had reached the place where he was dictating a chapter about the social and marriage customs of the natives of China." She paused, half blushed and went on:

"It was pretty frank, that chapter. Finally, he decided I should copy some pages from a book he had. He got the book from one of the cases—a case he kept always locked. It was a pretty rotten book—so rotten that I kicked a bit about copying the two pages. And then he flared up and said that if I did not care to do his work I could quit. And I got mad, and"—she laughed a bit sheepishly—"I guess it was the warm day got us both; anyway I got mad and left. I went to the house, and when I was packing my grip, the more I thought of it the madder I got. That's why I said the foolish thing I did to the housekeeper."

A cold flurry of wind came sweeping across the lake, and I saw the girl shiver. It was getting late in the afternoon. As I pulled out my watch to see the time, the chief said the girl had better dress, and that we would take her back to the village. As she seemed a little startled at this remark, he told her she was the only person who could tell us if anything had been taken from Warren's library. This seemed to relieve her a good deal, for there was little doubt in my mind that she thought the chief was going to arrest her. Saying she would be ready in a few moments, she rose to her feet and went slowly to the cottage.

When she was out of hearing the chief turned to me:

"Mr. Pelt, I guess there is no doubt that girl is telling the truth."

I assured him it was my own idea. I added that as Warren had not been killed until several hours after she had left his grounds it would be absurd to even think she knew anything about the murder. With a little grunt of approval, the chief studied the water for a while and we then turned to go to the car.

We had to wait a few moments and when the secretary rejoined us she was followed by the other girls of the camp. She had changed into a light summer dress and as I saw her coming across the tall grass, I thought again what a beautiful girl she was. The girls crowded around the car as she took her seat behind me, but they said little. I could tell by their serious faces that she had told them of the death of Mr. Warren and that they were not overpleased at the chief taking her away. They all kissed her in turn, after the manner girls have in saying good-by, and as we went around the bend in the road our last sight was of their waving hands.

It was a silent ride to town—no one doing any talking. For my part, it took all my skill to keep the car on the road. It was with an inward sigh of relief that I felt the firm concrete under the wheels when we struck the main highway. Just as we were coming into town the chief turned to tell the girl that he would drop her off at her aunt's. And as we pulled up in front of the white cottage he warned her not to talk to any one and told her to be at his office by seven.

I dropped the chief at the police station. As he climbed from the car, he stood a moment on the sidewalk to say that he wanted me to go with him that evening to Warren's. He was going to take the secretary

and have her tell him if anything had been disturbed. So saying I would meet him at the summer house around seven-thirty, I drove away.

As I parked the car in front of Carter's garage Trouble gave one quick leap over the side and went on a run up the steps to the veranda—barking at the top of his lungs. I saw him jump at the figure of a man who half rose from a chair, give one sudden, joyful bark, then run to the grass, only to leap back to the veranda. Wondering what had excited him, I got out of the car and started for the house. And as I went up the veranda steps, who should rise out of a chair and come over to greet me but Bartley.

That I was surprised to see him was putting it mildly. If I thought of him I pictured his sitting in the hot courtroom in New York awaiting his chance to testify. But here he was, very cool in his summer suit, and with a little smile of welcome playing around his fine lips. I rushed to his side and poured out my surprise.

He laughed, saying that he had managed to get away this morning. And then, as we both seated ourselves my eyes went wandering around for Carter. Seeing my glance, Bartley told me that Carter had been called down to the city two hours before by an urgent telegram from his chief. The two men, much to their mutual surprise, had met at the station and Carter had begged that Bartley stay at his house until he returned. He expected to be back in two days.

Just as he finished saying this, Ranville came out of the house. He and Bartley had met several times be-

fore and I knew they both had a great admiration for the other's ability. They joked a few minutes, and as the housekeeper came to the door to announce dinner, I hurried to my room for a quick wash.

Dinner turned out to be a lively meal. Under Bartley's conversation Ranville warmed up far more than I had seen before and the two men laughed and joked at many of the experiences about which they spoke. There was a decided contrast between them. Bartley's hair, which had also started to turn white, gave his fine face a very intellectual appearance. Ranville was far the more nervous of the two, and his rather thin face did not break into a smile as often as Bartley's.

For a time they talked of various places in Europe where they had spent vacations. Then they mentioned mutual acquaintances among the police officials of the Continent; and this naturally led to the murder of Warren.

Bartley informed us he had read all the papers had said about the crime, adding that as he did not know anything else, he had not formed an opinion. He remarked that though all he had talked with at the club were shocked at the sudden death of the scientist, their greatest concern was over what would be done regarding his book. And then with a laugh he said:

"You may be surprised, Ranville, to know there are a good many people in this country who think that Warren's taking off was an act of God."

The Englishman gave him a look to see if he was serious, then asked what he meant. Bartley half laughed as he replied:

"Really, it's not laughable, Ranville, for it is a state of mind which ought to have passed out in the Dark Ages. But there are certain rabid, fanatical groups which say in their weekly publications that God punished Warren because of his stand on evolution."

The eyes of the Scotland Yard Inspector gazed in a blank manner across the table. I could see he did not understand what Bartley was driving at. In a moment he asked:

"What do you mean?"

Bartley's voice became serious. "You, perhaps, do not understand just how extensive is the battle being waged in this country against science. Little theological leaders, without any knowledge of life or modern thought, have been stirring up their followers in a movement which is called 'Fundamentalism.' It is an appeal to all the bigotry which lies in the heart of uneducated people. Of course it is also a fear—a fear of knowledge. But in this campaign there have been many bitter things said. They are even trying to have science outlawed by law. One religious weekly said to-day, in a veiled editorial, that the taking off of Warren at the time he was going to give his new proofs of evolution to the world was an act of God."

Ranville shrugged his shoulders as though the whole thing was beyond his comprehension and, in fact, said as much. Bartley agreed with him. He added, such a thing was not understandable to any educated person but admitted rather gravely that the educated people were more or less outnumbered in our country.

As there came a pause in the conversation I remem-

bered that Carter had wired Washington regarding the Chinaman who had visited us. I turned to Ranville to ask if there had been a reply. He shook his head, replying that nothing had arrived. As Bartley did not understand what we were talking about, I informed him, and he asked us what had been the substance of the oriental's conversation. We told him how he claimed to have found Warren dead with the dagger still in the wound. He said nothing until we had finished, then asked:

"What did he say was his object in calling on Warren?"

"Some silly story about a box with the ashes of Buddha in it," drawled Ranville. "A yarn about Buddha's body being burned when he died, and the ashes being buried in seven places. Said Warren walked away with one of the boxes of ashes."

I saw a smile creep over Bartley's face as he asked:

"Just what was his story?"

The Englishman dropped two lumps of sugar into his coffee and, taking his spoon, stirred it slowly; then he replied:

"He said that when Buddha was dead they burned his body and then divided the ashes into seven piles. Buried them in seven different places. That's about what he told us; seemed a silly yarn to me."

"Well, Ranville," replied Bartley, "it is all true. Tradition said that the ashes of the great religious teacher were placed in seven boxes and that seven shrines were erected. Up until a few years ago the scholars rather doubted the entire story; but they dug

into one of the reputed shrines in India a while ago and found a box of gold and rare wood. It contained ashes and a fragment of bone. They are pretty sure it contained Buddha's ashes."

"That's what he said," commented Ranville. "And then he went on to tell us Warren had picked up one of those boxes in China. He wanted him to give it back. Chinese were all heated up over it, or something of that sort."

"He said that Warren found one of them in China?" was Bartley's question, and because of the surprise in his tone we both looked at him.

"That's what he said," retorted Ranville; "why?"

There was a slight frown on Bartley's face and, pushing aside his coffee cup, he lighted a long thin cigar. Then he turned to the Englishman.

"Why," he said, "simply this, Ranville. There were seven reputed shrines of Buddha. Not all of them are known. But the seven shrines in which were buried a portion of his ashes were in India. There was not one in China. And—"

Ranville was always unruffled and I had failed to see him excited. Even the discovery of Warren's body had not caused any apparent show of emotion. But at Bartley's remark he gave a sudden start and I saw his lips tighten. He turned quickly to say:

"Then when he said that he lied."

Bartley was thoughtful a moment, replying slowly:

"If he told you Warren returned from China with a box containing part of the ashes of Buddha he must have lied. At the present time the scholars almost all

agree that the discovery made by digging into the shrine in India I told you of is true. That is, they accept the tradition that the ashes of Buddha were divided into seven parts and buried in seven places. They go further and say that the box they found no doubt contains the ashes of the great teacher—part of them. But so far as I know there has never been any other box of ashes discovered; and it is absurd to say that Warren found them in China, for the ashes were all buried in India. When he said that, he must have lied, or else—”

“He was too smooth an article to be mistaken,” was my comment, to which Ranville nodded his assent.

“No doubt,” was Bartley’s retort. “But there is one thing sure; he did not tell you the real reason for his visit to Warren’s library.”

“I doubt if he told the truth regarding finding the body,” was my contribution.

“You know,” broke in Ranville, “we people at Scotland Yard are often accused of being slow. But there is one thing sure. We would have locked that Chinaman up and kept him for a while. His story sounded good. But at the same time he was the last person who went to the library around the time of the murder. And thinking it over now, there is another thing I want to know. He said the door was open and he walked in. If that’s true, who closed it afterward? And what’s more, who took the knife from the body? That was a silly thing to do after the murderer went away.”

Bartley gave him a long look and slowly repeated the word, silly, then became silent. Ranville and I

entered into an argument as to whether the man had gone to the chief of police, as we suggested, and told him the story. Ranville had just said he would wager the chief had not seen him when the word "chief" made me give a quick look at my watch and remember that I was to meet him at Warren's library at seven-thirty. One glance told me it was now fifteen minutes past the hour. I arose with a sudden exclamation.

As I pushed back my chair, both men looked at me in surprise. In a few words I told where I was going, and Bartley at once suggested that he would go with us, to which the Englishman added his assent. We found our hats, went out on the lawn and, finding the Airedale running back and forth, locked him in the garage. The next moment we were in the car and a second later drove out of the yard.

CHAPTER X

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

As we went up the hill which led to the eight-sided building in which we had found the murdered scientist, we concluded the chief had arrived. The lights were streaming out of the windows and the front door was slightly open. As we passed within the chief came over from the desk in the center of the room. I introduced him to Bartley and he shook his hand with evident pleasure.

For a few moments the two men talked. The chief told us the room was untouched from the night of the crime. After we had left he had stationed one of his policemen in the library. He said that he did not want the place overrun with people, and he knew that until the secretary had been found there was no way for him to tell if anything was missing. The room had not been entered by any one, though there had been hundreds of people drawn by curiosity who had wished to look within.

Bartley's eyes swept around the book-lined walls and then came to rest on the big desk in the center of the room. I told him where we had found the body and he slowly walked over to the place I pointed out. The chairs were just as we had found them and I mentioned what Ranville had said regarding the murderer

sitting across from Warren. He slowly nodded his head in approval and then, turning, his keen eyes saw the broken glass in the bookcase.

I told him we had found it in that condition; and he went over to the case and, bending down, looked at the contents. Pulling first one and then another of the thin books from the case, he glanced at their title page, only to return them to the shelf. He spent some little time at the row which had the gaps in it, and I saw him half frown as he looked at every book on that shelf. He was just starting to say something when a voice from the door called:

"I hope I have not kept you waiting."

We turned to see the secretary coming across the floor. She had changed her light dress for one of some darker material, and her face was very serious. As she cast a glance at the desk, I saw her shudder, and her cheeks grew a little pale. But there was nothing of fear in the frank glance she gave the chief and the rather curious look which went over Bartley and Ranville. The chief introduced her to the two men, and in a few words told them what she had said had been the reason she left her work so suddenly. When he had finished her face flushed as she spoke:

"I have been thinking ever since you told me of Mr. Warren's death how very foolish I was to have used the expression that I did. I never meant anything by it—simply let my temper run away with me."

I saw Bartley's cool glance as he studied her, and then there came a little smile around his lips as he said:

"Miss Harlan, it is the privilege of young women to lose their tempers. Only in your case it happened that what you said became public. I am sure the chief will agree with me that you are sorry you said what you did; but though there will naturally fall some suspicion because of your going away, yet I think we can take care of that."

The chief nodded and a grateful look swept over the girl's face. I judged from her expression that it had come over her the last few hours in what a peculiar situation she was in. That she knew the slightest thing about the murder, I doubted. And I knew from Bartley's expression he felt the same way. Just what the chief might think I could not tell. His heavy face wore a rather bewildered look and as he glanced around the room it struck me that he hardly knew what his next step should be.

Bartley must have sensed the chief's feeling, for he turned, saying:

"Chief, I have had a great deal of experience in these kinds of cases; I thought perhaps you might let me ask Miss Harlan a few questions. It has been a difficult afternoon for her, and she needs a little rest. Perhaps I can gain all the information she has to give in a few moments."

The chief jumped at the suggestion and Bartley, turning to the girl, asked her to tell us in detail just what she and Warren did in the hours they passed in the library. There was not much to tell. Warren was working over his notes—the notes of his expedition to Mongolia. He would dictate a chapter which she

would type, and then he would go over it and correct it. The book, she judged, was half done, for he had told her the day before she left him that the most important half was coming. I judged from what she said that there had been no regular hours for work; sometimes they would work until late in the evening; sometimes they would stop at six.

"Did you have many callers at the library?" asked Bartley.

"No one," was the reply. "Mr. Warren refused to see any one here. Sometimes some one would come, but I always met them and they never even got within the room."

"How about the telephone?" questioned Ranville. "I see there are two."

She nodded. "Yes, one connects directly with the house; the housekeeper used that to get Mr. Warren. The other ran outside. But there were not many calls that came through—maybe two or three a day, sometimes not even one."

There was a little smile around Bartley's lips as he asked the next question. But it was a very pleasing smile—one which caused the serious look to leave the girl's face.

"Now, Miss Harlan, you say that the work was rather hard, that you sometimes were here twelve and fourteen hours a day. I judge also Mr. Warren was not the easiest person to work with. Now, tell us just what happened the afternoon you left him—what made you angry."

The secretary's face reddened, but her eyes met Bart-

ley's bravely. "You are right when you say Mr. Warren was not easy to work for, but perhaps—it was more my fault than his. He was a very nervous man whose mind worked very quickly. I had never done this kind of work before. Not only were the terms he used in dictating new to me, but there were long lists of references which I had to verify. The afternoon of his death I had been planning to go to a dance in the evening. About three o'clock Mr. Warren told me we would work until ten; that made me a little angry. Then he decided he wanted to have two pages copied from one of the books in that case."

She pointed to the case with the broken door and, seeing our inquiring look, explained:

"It was not broken when I left. Mr. Warren always kept that case locked. But he sent me for a book and when I got it he found two pages that I was to copy in his notes. I started to look at the book and there were pictures in it." Her face flushed very red as the recollection came to her.

"Pictures?" asked Bartley. "What have they to do with it?"

"Perhaps nothing, sir," was her quick response. "I was pretty tired, and it was warm. Naturally, I felt disappointed over having to work until ten. And then I saw those pictures, and they were very bad—I never saw anything like them."

She paused, then went on quickly: "Mr. Warren asked me what was the matter and I told him. He said he did not hire me to comment on the morality of his books and that led me to get angry. I told him

I had a good mind to leave him. He laughed and said he judged he could find a good many better typists than myself. So—so I simply told him I was through. I went to the house and got my bag. You know the rest.”

“What was the book?” was Bartley’s question.

“De Sade’s ‘Justine’—the third volume.”

“And did you place it back in the case?”

She shook her head. “No, I locked the case and gave the key to Mr. Warren. But the volume was on the desk when I left.”

We had looked the desk over after the murder, but there had been no book of that description. It would have been easy to have seen it, because of the shape and because the books in that case were almost all bound in white vellum or red morocco. I told Bartley this, and he went over to the case, returning with a book—a book bound in red—which he simply handed to me. It was the first volume of the original ten-volume edition of De Sade’s work. I gave it one look and said that I had not seen it on the desk.

He turned to the girl. “It was bound like this, was it not?”

“No,” was her rather surprising answer. “It was not. There were six books in the set. Mr. Warren said that the last eight volumes were bound two to a book. For some reason the second volume and the other four were bound in white. This one was red—the only one of the set with that color for a cover.”

I saw a curious smile play over Bartley’s face. Slowly, he turned the pages of the book, and then to

my surprise he placed it in his pocket. Then, turning to the girl, he asked:

"Now, did any one call the library on the telephone during the afternoon?"

"Two people, both men. I do not know who they were. Mr. Warren answered the phone. I don't even know what they wanted."

"And do you know if Mr. Warren was expecting any visitor?"

"Not that I know of," was her response. "In fact I doubt it very much."

Though other questions were asked her, she knew nothing more of value. She did say the windows and the door were left open while they were working, but that Mr. Warren had them closed every evening. When she left the library the windows were all open and she could not account for any reason why they should be closed. Then, at our request, she went carefully over the room in an attempt to discover if anything had been disturbed. But when she had finished, she was forced to admit that nothing had been touched.

For a moment after she made this statement we stood silent, wondering just what our next move could be; and then came Bartley's voice:

"Miss Harlan, where did Mr. Warren keep his manuscript and the notes of his trip to China?"

She pointed to the large safe which stood near the door. As Bartley went over to look at it, I followed him. It was a rather large safe and, as I expected, it was locked. Bartley stood looking at it a moment, only to turn when the girl said:

"I know the combination, Mr. Bartley. Mr. Warren had me lock it every night. Also open it at times. He always used the same combination."

At the chief's suggestion she came over to the safe and, bending down, fumbled for a moment or so with the lock. The first time she tried she did not get the right combination, but the next trial resulted in the door being opened. The interior of the safe was of the usual type, save for the fact that there seemed far more space than is usual. This open space at the lower half was filled with a mass of papers which no one disturbed. At Bartley's request after his short examination she closed the safe, giving him the combination which he wrote down in a little red note book.

We slowly returned to the center of the room, no one speaking. The girl's story had added little, if anything, to our knowledge. So far as we could tell nothing in the room had been disturbed or even touched. As to gaining any knowledge which would aid us in solving the mystery of Warren's death, we were in the same position as before. I think the chief was thinking this, for I saw him glance slowly around the room and then shake his head. And then Ranville's voice broke the silence.

"Miss Harlan, there is just one thing you might explain. You said that you were angry because Mr. Warren wished you to work until ten o'clock. Did you expect he was to be with you in the library?"

"No," was the reply. "In fact, I knew he would not have been. He had a dinner he was giving to three

men. But there were notes which had to be typed. He would have corrected the manuscript the next morning. That's why I would have had to stay so late. He was in a hurry to finish the book, you know."

"Fine," came the drawling voice of the Englishman. "And now did you ever hear some silly story about Mr. Warren having a box with the bone—excuse me—the ashes of Buddha in it?"

The girl's eyes grew large as she gazed at Ranville. I could see that she thought he was joking, and at his next remark her eyes grew even larger as he asked:

"And did any Chinaman come around here to see Mr. Warren?"

She shook her head, saying she knew nothing of either a Chinaman or a box with ashes in it. It was clear she did not even understand what he was talking about, for she glanced at both the chief and Bartley as if asking for information. But instead of replying the chief reached into his pocket and came forth with a long envelope. Very slowly he opened it and brought forth a piece of paper. As I saw the torn sheet, I recognized it. It was the letter I had found on the desk. Approaching the girl and holding the letter where she could read it, he asked:

"Did you ever see that?"

She carefully read the few lines, and then shook her head. Bartley's hand went out for the sheet of paper and as he took it I told him where we had found it. He said nothing for a moment, then turned to the girl:

"Did you open Mr. Warren's mail?" he asked.

"As a rule I did. I never saw that letter. And I never heard anything about a Chinaman or any box of ashes of any kind."

As Bartley gazed at his watch he said that it was rather late, and that perhaps Ranville would be willing to drive the secretary home in our car. Ranville nodded his assent and said that he would come back for us, to which Bartley replied by saying that we could walk back to the house. As the Englishman and the girl started for the door Bartley, who was by the desk, bent forward to pick something from the floor. Then he called to the secretary.

"Miss Harlan, who cleaned this room?"

She had reached the door, but turned to answer him.

"Why, Jimmy—the man who works around the grounds. He swept every morning before we came to work."

"Did he clean the room the day of the murder?"

"Yes, he was here when I came; had just finished." She paused, waiting for another question, but instead Bartley said "Good night," and she went outside. When she had gone, he turned to the chief and myself.

"I picked this up on the floor," he said, holding some object in his hand. We came closer to see what it was. As we looked we saw a small bone hairpin, which we gazed at without speaking. As he placed it in his pocket, he said:

"It may not mean a single thing. The secretary has her hair bobbed, so, of course, she does not use hairpins. But if the man cleaned up the place the morning of the murder he must have overlooked this."

No one made any reply, and the chief stood looking rather moodily at the desk. Then he asked:

"What do you think about that letter?"

Instead of replying, Bartley walked over to the type-writing stand. The typewriter was covered, but he took the cover off. Finding a piece of blank paper, he placed it in the machine and struck several of the keys, then wrote a sentence. He turned to ask that the chief let him see the letter, and then evidently copied something from it. Pulling from the machine the sheet upon which he had written, he compared the two for a moment. Then he said.

"I do not know, chief, what to say regarding that letter. It was written on this machine, however."

There came a grunt from the chief, and the words:

"It was?"

"Yes. There is no doubt of it. This machine is a bit out of alignment; the letters 'e' and 'a' are very much worn. You will find the same markings in the letter you found on the desk and in the copy I struck off."

A comparison of the two sheets of paper convinced the chief and me that they had, indeed, been written upon the same typewriter, the one upon the stand before us. The letters Bartley mentioned were a little worn and both copies showed the same markings. Not only that, the ribbon was rather old, and the type bars seemed out of alignment. As we saw these facts, the chief well expressed my opinion when he said in a very amazed voice:

"I guess you are right. But what under heavens does it mean?"

Bartley reached for his cigar case, and then he handed it to us. We all took a cigar and after Bartley had lighted his he said:

"I can only tell you what I think it might mean, Chief. The letter was written after Warren was killed—written to be discovered."

"How do you make that out?" was the query.

"Well, it seems very logical to say that if the person who wrote it had not wished any one to see it, he or she would have destroyed the entire letter. To simply tear off the signature—if there was one—meant nothing. If they wished to have no one see the letter they would have destroyed it all. Then, it is written on this typewriter. The secretary says that no one was in the library during the time she was here on that last day. I do not think she wrote it; the murderer might have done so, and if so, he wrote it to make you think just what you did think."

As the chief's eyes expressed his wonder, Bartley added:

"Suppose, for instance, that the person who killed Warren did it in a sudden fit of frenzy. Then, when the deed was over, there came the second cooler thought—he had committed a murder. Criminals, that is, all that I know, always make mistakes. This one realized he was pretty safe, but he thought he had better make it safer, throw suspicion on some one else. Seeing the typewriter, he wrote that part of the letter you see, and left it where he knew some one would find

it. And by doing that he defeated the very thing he wanted us to think. For if he had not left that portion, we would not have known anything about it. It is a very mysterious murder at the best, and this makes it more so."

"You're right when you say it is a mysterious murder," shot forth the chief. "It's damned mysterious. And here am I—without any clues, without any sort of a chance to solve it. There is nothing missing even from the room."

"Oh, yes, there is," came Bartley's quick comment.

"There is not," answered the chief. "That girl knows the room, everything in it. She says there is nothing missing."

"But then she is mistaken," was the cool reply.

As the chief started to speak, he went on:

"The girl told you the truth, and yet she is mistaken. There is something missing. It is the rest of that edition of De Sade," and he pointed to the red-covered book which he placed on the surface of the desk.

The chief's eyes went to the book, but he glanced at it as if he did not believe what Bartley had said. Then, as he turned, he burst out:

"What do you mean?"

"This, Chief. I happen to know about this edition of De Sade's 'Justine.' It is not very common, though it is very famous; perhaps I had better say 'infamous.' The original edition was in ten small volumes with one hundred illustrations—illustrations as bad as the text. The author, a pathological case, spent most of his time in insane asylums, sent there first by Napoleon. He

was not insane, however, in the strict sense of the word. Now, as I said, there were ten volumes. The secretary said that the last eight volumes of the set Mr. Warren had were bound two to a book; the first two were not."

There was a perplexed look on the chief's face. He was trying to follow Bartley, but did not seem to understand just what it was all about. Seeing this, Bartley explained:

"What I mean is this. Mr. Warren's set contained six bound books. Five of them, the girl said, were bound in white vellum. The first volume was bound in red morocco. That case was locked during the afternoon. Some one smashed the glass, so it could not have been Mr. Warren who took the books. They took what they thought was the entire set or edition. But they made a mistake, a natural one—"

"What was that?" came the chief's insistent voice.

"A very logical and very simple mistake. They saw the books were all bound in white vellum; so they were—all but the first volume—that was red morocco. They took the five books thinking they had the set, but left the red one behind. No doubt they were so upset they did not think of looking very closely. But they took the books all right. That is what is missing from the room."

"But, my God, Mr. Bartley," broke in the chief, "no one would murder a man for five books."

Bartley laughed. "If you knew the history of crime, Chief, you would know there have been several murders over a book. One man not only killed his best

friend to secure the possession of a rare book he had, but burned his house after the crime. Yet in a sense you are right. I fail to understand why any one should kill Warren for this particular set."

"Are they worth much?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Not much as rare books go. The work has been reprinted under cover. You can buy it for about twenty-five dollars in Europe. I doubt if the original edition is worth over two hundred. And the type of man who would steal that sort of a book after committing a murder is—"

Suddenly he paused as if a new thought had suddenly come to him, but what it was he did not say. There came the voice of the chief, and there was such a complaining tone in his voice that I almost laughed.

"You know, Mr. Bartley, this thing has me all upset. There has not been a murder in the village for years and years. Now comes this thing and the papers are full of it. What to do I do not know. And there seems to be no reason on earth why Mr. Warren was murdered."

No one made any reply to his plaintive remark, and there came a silence for a moment which he broke by saying:

"I forgot to tell Florence that I had a long distance call from that man who is going to finish Mr. Warren's book—Patton, I think the name was. He wants her to act as his secretary, like she did for Warren; said that she knew more about his papers than any one else. But then I can get her in the morning."

There seemed to be little more that we could do, and we started for the door; before we reached it the chief asked:

"Do you think, Mr. Bartley, that the murderer closed those windows which were found locked?"

"There seems no reason why he should have done it," was the reply. "I would say that Mr. Warren had closed them himself. He must have been just on the verge of leaving for the house to get ready for dinner. Let us say he had closed the windows for the night when some one came. There would be no real reason why the murderer should have closed them."

As he paused, I turned to glance at the windows. They were placed above the bookcases—one window for each of the eight sides of the building. And then, as my eyes went to the central window, I gave a gasp and then a sudden cry. For there, peering through the window, was a face—a face whose outlines were far from plain. But I could see the hat pulled low over the eyes, and the eyes themselves, which seemed to meet my own. For an instant I saw them, and as our glance met, the face disappeared. But for a second I had seen it—a man's face peering through the central window into the room.

CHAPTER XI

THE GARDENER SPEAKS

My glance at the window had been but a casual thing and the appearance of the face had lasted only a second. As the face vanished, I uttered a sudden cry—one which caused Bartley to give me a quick look. Briefly I told what I had seen, and pointed at the window; then we turned and rushed for the door and out into the open air.

The library stood upon the top of a small hill, and there were no trees within a short distance. At the bottom of the hill, however, the lawn was covered with trees and shrubbery. It was dark, yet not so dark but that we should have been able to have seen any figure which ran across our vision. But save for the trees in the distance, which loomed a darker shadow against the blackness, we saw nothing. Bartley motioned with his hand and we followed him to the rear of the house.

Here, too, there was a close-cropped lawn with the trees commencing on the far edge. The trees were thicker and the shrubbery far more dense than in the front. It needed but a look to realize that it was absurd to expect to discover any one in the darkness. The huge lawn, together with the many trees, offered many opportunities for hiding. Just as I was about to say this there came a sharp exclamation of surprise and the

sound of two people tumbling through the hedge far to our left.

The path to the library ran between two rows of a high hedge. As we rushed across the grass, the sounds of the struggle came louder to our ears. Two people were thrashing back and forth upon the ground slightly ahead of us. As we reached the path and turned past the slight bend, we almost stumbled over two men—two men rolling to and fro on the gravel.

We could dimly distinguish their figures as they struggled. Save for the crunching of the gravel in the path and their hurried breathing, they made no sound. Over and over, first one on top and then the other, they rolled. The chief and Bartley rushed in to separate them. As Bartley's hand reached the man who for the moment was on top there came Ranville's voice.

"Just grab hold of this chap under me, will you?"

The chief pulled the other man to his feet as Ranville stood erect. I heard him brushing the dirt from his clothes and then he laughed:

"I was coming up this confounded path when that blighter ran smash into me; almost knocked me off my feet. And when I asked him what the rush was, he tried to knock me down. Naturally enough, I decided we'd better have a look at him."

Pushing the man ahead of him, the chief started back to the library, we following him. No one said anything, and whoever the man might be, he kept his mouth shut. Up the steps to the piazza and then through the open door we marched. When we were in the room, the chief whirled the man around to get a

look at his face. It needed but one glance to tell who he was. The heavy, dull face turned toward us and filled with fear was that of the man who worked around Warren's grounds.

He was a thick-set man whose features at the inquest had not impressed me very highly. No one, looking at him at any time, would have said he was very imposing, either in intelligence or physique; now, with his face streaked with dirt from the path in which he had rolled, and with the blood trickling from a slight cut above his eye, he made a rather sinister appearance. The dark hair was a tangled mass, and his eyes glared at us as he half yelled:

"What are you trying to do to me? I ain't done nothing."

"What were you looking through the window for?" growled the chief.

Though I was pretty sure that the gardener was the man whose face I had seen at the window a few moments before, yet I was not positive; his next words, however, were a confession:

"Suppose I was?" he snarled. "There is no harm in that."

"Maybe not," retorted the chief. "But you were pretty anxious to get away without being seen."

"You're right there, Officer," laughed Ranville. "He was running as fast as he could when he banged into me."

Ranville was wearing a light summer suit—a suit remarkable, not only for the fineness of the cloth, but also for the way it was pressed; now it was a mass of

wrinkles, stained and soiled from the dirt. But though the face of the Englishman had a dark streak which ran from his eyes to his lips, yet from his manner one would never have thought that only a moment or so before he had been struggling with the gardener.

His remark caused the chief to make a vain attempt to wring from the man the reason why he had been looking in the window, and also why he had run away. But the gardener refused to make any explanations. He would simply shrug his shoulders, or else growl out that he had done nothing. In the end the chief, by this time a very angry man, announced he would lock him up in the jail for the night.

"Maybe by morning you will feel like talking," was the statement he hurled at the gardener.

We waited until after the chief had called the police station and asked them to send a car for his prisoner. Then bidding him good night, we left the library and started for our car. As we walked down the path, Ranville told us that though we had said we would walk back to the house, yet it had taken so little time to reach the secretary's home that he had come back to pick us up. He had just started up the path to the library when he heard running footsteps and the next second the man had plunged against him. The two men had rolled over and over and as the man seemed determined to get away, Ranville had decided that he had better discover who he might be.

All the way back to the house we discussed the matter, reaching no conclusion. How long the gardener had been watching us or for what reason we could

not say. Ranville was more interested in endeavoring to find out why the man had attempted to get away without being seen. To him that was the suspicious thing. Otherwise he would have seen no reason to become excited over the fact the man had looked in the window. Curiosity could explain that action. It would not, however, explain his effort to escape without being seen. We were still talking about it when we drove into the yard.

Telling Bartley that I would place the car in the garage, I let the two men out by the drive, noticing as I did so that the lights were turned on in the house. The dog leaped with a bark to greet me as I opened the garage door and followed me when I went into the house. Hearing the sound of voices in the living room, I entered to find Bartley talking with Carter's neighbor, the minister.

Seating myself in a chair, I listened to the conversation. I could tell the clergyman did not have the slightest idea who Bartley might be. I judged also that he was a little surprised at not finding Carter at home. There was a great contrast between the two men. The minister was very tall and thin and extremely nervous. His eyes looked tired, and there was a certain condescension in his voice which I have noticed in other men of his profession. Bartley, on the other hand, leaned back in his chair with the restful air which he always wore. His keen, intellectual face had not a single line, and though I judged the two men were about the same age, Bartley looked at least ten years younger.

For a while they talked in the idle fashion men do when they are strangers. Then for a time they spoke about certain books. In the end, naturally enough, they came to Warren's death. It was the clergyman who brought up the subject by saying that he judged they would never find the murderer. Bartley made no response to this, but went on to say that the death of the scientist was a very deplorable thing for the intellectual world. And to my surprise the minister promptly said that he did not agree with this. And then suddenly he began to talk very earnestly.

Long before he had finished I discovered that the man was very narrow to say the least. He informed us that though he was sorry to have heard of Mr. Warren's being murdered, yet, after all, he considered it an act of God. I gave a start at this, for they were the very words Bartley had told us had been used in the editorial he had read in a religious journal. As the minister uttered them, I saw a rather dismayed smile flit over Bartley's face, and he half protested.

The face of the minister lightened with strange intensity. His face flushed with eagerness as he leaned forward to say:

"I know, of course, the phrase does not sound well. But you do not know as I do how the materialistic teachings of the scientists are undermining the faith of our young people. These men are destroying the very word of God. Mr. Warren said that his new book would settle for all time the question of evolution."

He paused to give a scornful laugh.

"Of course, he was wrong there. Evolution is sim-

ply a guess of man and can never be proven to be right. But his book might have caused much confusion among the unthinking people. Now it can never be written."

Bartley started to say something but checked himself and slumped far down in his chair. At this moment Ranville came into the room. He had changed his suit and with a nod to the minister took a chair near me. The minister eyed the Englishman for a second, then turned to carry on the strange argument. He bent forward with an intensity of feeling and swept on:

"You men do not realize as some of we clergymen do just how evil have become the times in which we are living. The young people of to-day have no interest in sacred things. Pleasure and materialism are sweeping over us; if it is not checked, God will blot us out just as he did in the time of Noah."

I saw Ranville's eyes open wide in astonishment. He gave the excited man in the chair a look and drawled out:

"Really now, you can't mean all that."

The minister brought his thin hand down upon the arm of his chair. His voice rose a little and became sharper as he replied:

"But I do, I do. There is a wave of irreligion sweeping over the world. Most of it is due to the materialistic teaching of the so-called 'men of science.' Their absurd theory of evolution, which teaches that man is a brute instead of a son of God, is responsible for a good deal of it."

Ranville gave a little puzzled shake of his head and looked at the minister as though he was studying a new sort of animal. Then he asked:

"Well, how do you expect to stop all the scientific teaching?"

The minister almost jumped from his chair as he cried:

"We are going to stop it! We must! We have millions of God-fearing people behind us. Before we are through, we will prevent the teaching of evolution by law. Make it a crime to put materialistic theories in the minds of the young."

Bartley's eyes met those of Ranville and the two men faintly smiled. I looked at the minister, hardly thinking he believed what he was saying. It needed, however, but a glance at the thin face and the fixed determined lips to see that he was in earnest. There was a certain look in his eyes that I did not like—the look of the fanatic. But just when I had thought of that his expression changed and there came a smile around his lips—a smile which made his face almost attractive. He half laughed as he said:

"Well, I was getting started on my hobby. It is all true what I have said. Religion is dying out under the sweep of materialistic things. Why in the ten churches in this town—churches which will seat around four thousand people—there were only 540 in them all last Sunday. But—" He hesitated, and then went on: "But I don't want you to take what I said amiss. I am very sorry Mr. Warren was killed. But in a sense

to me it seems that if such a thing had to happen, it was good it came when it did."

"What do you mean by that?" came Ranville's surprised question.

"Why now that book of his will never be published," was the retort.

There came Bartley's cool voice:

"Oh, yes, it will. Niles Patton, who was Warren's assistant on the trip into China, is to arrive to-morrow. He will finish editing Warren's notes. The book will be out all right."

I saw a very surprised look sweep across the minister's face, and there came a slight frown. But he said nothing for a minute, and when he did speak, it was to ask if we thought the Chinaman who had been mentioned at the inquest, had anything to do with the murder. He was told we did not know, and then for some reason the conversation died away. Inviting us to call at his house, he bade us good night and went out.

After his footsteps had died away, Ranville turned to Bartley with a little laugh and asked:

"Do you have many like him?"

"Far more than you think," was the serious reply. "In fact, Ranville, he told the truth. There are millions in this country who are trying to have laws passed which will prevent the teaching of science. We have three great religious denominations that maintain great political lobbies in Washington. They may be narrow, uncultured and all that, but they are also sincere—the

sincerity of the uneducated, and those who from the standpoint of the psychologist fear the newer knowledge. They want Sunday blue laws, censorship and, above all, to prevent by law all things in which they do not believe. He was right when he said that many of those people think Warren's death was an act of God."

Ranville shook his head as if saying that such things were beyond his comprehension. He laughed a bit, and had a little fun with us by saying that it was time we became civilized; then lapsed into silence. For a time we sat quietly thinking, the smoke from our cigars curling above our heads. It was Ranville who spoke first, turning to Bartley:

"What do you think was back of this murder?"

"It is going to be pretty hard to discover. I suppose you Scotland Yard men always do the same thing I do, try first to find the motive for a crime."

The Inspector nodded, replying:

"We do. But of course we have an extensive system which covers the whole of England. Even at that it would be rather difficult to find any apparent motive for this murder. There is none on the surface."

"None that we usually find. Warren had no relative except his brother in the south. He is a very wealthy man, and the property will go to him. No family troubles. It seems from all we have heard he was not killed for money. There was nothing of any value taken. On the other hand, he had no enemies so far as I ever heard; in fact, the more you look at it the greater becomes the mystery. Just why a man like

Warren should have been killed is the question we must answer first. Until that is answered there can be no chance of answering the second—who killed him.”

The Englishman was thoughtful for a while, and then sinking back in his chair said slowly:

“That is true. The only thing we do not know about is what might have taken place in China.”

“I know about that,” commented Bartley, and as we both looked at him in surprise, he added:

“I ran into Niles Patton at the University Club yesterday. I have known Patton for a long time. He was with Warren in China. He says that they had no trouble at all on their expedition. The only reason they were delayed in returning was not because they were molested by outlaws, but on account of the great discoveries of fossils Warren made. He says that so far as he knows Warren did not have an enemy in the whole of China. You will meet him when he comes up here to finish Warren’s notes, and he will tell you the same thing.”

“But, John,” I ventured. “How about that Chinaman who visited us and the story he told?”

Bartley threw out his hands in a gesture of hopelessness and said that he could not answer the question. For a while we commented about his visit, and agreed with Bartley the man had lied to us when he spoke about a box which contained the ashes of Buddha. It was Ranville’s opinion that the Chinaman had come more to discover what we knew than any other reason. He was rather insistent that the man

should have been held by the police. And then I remembered that I had not told Bartley of my visit to the swamp and of the attack which had been made on me at the church tower.

He listened soberly, smiled once or twice as something struck him as being humorous, and opened his eyes when I narrated how I was thrown over the tower. He laughed when I told him of the amazed look upon the minister's face as he heard my voice and opened the trap door. But he did not make any comment, saying that it was rather an odd thing to have taken place.

As Bartley did not comment on my accident, Ranville after a pause asked him if he had any kind of a theory about the case. I saw Bartley's lips melt into a firm line, and he turned to the Englishman.

"I have no theory at all, Ranville. It seems to me that there is something we do not know—some little thing, perhaps, which might give the light we need. What it is I cannot even guess. You know that our work is one-third brains and perhaps two-thirds luck. As this case now stands, all the brains we may use upon it will not aid us unless luck plays a little part. Plays it by giving that little clew—the hint which would cause us to discover what the motive might be or find the type of a person who might have killed Warren."

The telephone bell interrupted him. It was a long, incessant ring. I went into the hall, and in a moment there came the voice of the chief asking for Bartley. Telling him to wait, I returned to the living room and said that the chief was calling. With a half smile

Bartley rose to his feet and went out into the hall. We heard the low murmur of his voice, and the conversation was rather long. When it ceased, he came slowly back and dropped into a chair. There was a rather perplexed look on his face as he turned to us.

"The chief called up to tell me he has succeeded in getting the gardener to talk. And the chief, I might add, although he promised to let the man go, has decided to hold him longer."

"What for?" we both cried.

"Well," came the slow reply, "the gardener says that he was asked to go into Warren's library and take one of those three caskets which I noticed on the stands. He was to take the one nearest the safe; for doing this he would receive one hundred dollars."

"Who asked him to do that?" came Ranville's eager question.

Bartley shrugged his shoulders in a gesture which might express anything.

"He says your Chinese visitor was the one who made the proposal."

CHAPTER XII

THE CHINAMAN REAPPEARS

WE did not speak for a moment. Bartley's statement had been so unexpected that I saw a rather questioning look pass over Ranville's face. Though I had been surprised to discover that the man who had looked through the library window was the gardener, yet I had not thought there was anything suspicious in his action. His explanation, that he had seen the light in the building and had gone to see who was within, had sounded reasonable. The dull, stolid type of man he was seemed to make it impossible there could be any real motive in his trying to escape.

A look at both Bartley and Ranville told me they had a different opinion. That the gardener had been asked by the Chinaman who had visited us to take one of the small caskets from the library was a rather startling piece of information. Perhaps it was even more—that bit of luck which Bartley said might lead to the solving of the mystery. Just as I was about to say this, Ranville spoke:

"Looks to me as though we had better run up to the library again."

Bartley nodded, and as we rose to go out into the hall for our hats, all at once the door bell rang—a long, shrill ring which died away, only to be repeated. With a bound and a growl Trouble gave one leap, waking

from his sound sleep, and rushed to the hall. As I was the closest to the front door, I went to open it, wondering who it might be.

Pushing the growling dog behind me, I opened the door to find a messenger boy standing there. With a half grin he extended a telegram in my direction. I signed the book, gave the boy a tip, and brought the yellow envelope into the house. As I glanced at it, I saw it was addressed to Carter.

Bartley took the telegram, and after a look at the name said that he thought he had better open it. He tore the thin paper, took out the message and slowly read it through. As he glanced over the words, I saw his eyebrows raise a little. Then he said, turning to us both:

"Listen to this. It will interest you."

"Washington, D. C.

"Know nothing of man you wired about under name given. No one that name ever connected with Embassy either here or London. Description given does not fit any one we have information about. Am wiring San Francisco and New York.

"WING."

As he finished reading it, he saw that Ranville was not familiar with the name which was signed to the telegram, so he said:

"This is the answer to the message you told me Carter sent to his chief in Washington. Wing is the head of the identification end of the Secret Service.

From what he says you can see they do not know your Chinese friend."

Ranville's face clouded for a moment. He informed us he had been of the opinion that the oriental had told us the truth. He added, there was only one explanation of his visit that now seemed reasonable. As we both waited for him to tell us what he thought, he continued:

"Our Chinese gentleman must have come here more to see if we had any suspicions of him than anything else. He had his nerve at that. He must have known Carter is with the secret service, and that I am in the same line myself. He was fishing for information."

Bartley nodded, agreeing:

"You are right. But at the same time I have an idea that he came for another reason also. It was information he wanted, but information of another type, perhaps."

As we both looked at him in surprise, he went on:

"There seems little doubt the story he told you regarding having an appointment with Mr. Warren and about the ashes of Buddha were lies. But I am half believing he did tell you the truth when he said he found Mr. Warren dead. What he came to see you about was something else. He knew that his appearance would be spoken about. What he wanted to discover from you was if you had found out the real object of his visit to the library. And that means—"

"And that means," broke in Ranville, "the quicker we get over to the library and take a look at that box the better."

Bartley agreed to this and, asking me to get the car, started up the stairs to his room saying there were several small things he wished to take with him. By the time I had driven the car from the garage to the side of the house Bartley and Ranville were ready and jumped in by my side.

We said nothing on our ride. It was after twelve, a warm summer evening with just enough moon to make the driving good. I drove at a rather high speed, for the streets were empty, and only a few lights were to be seen at the windows of the houses we passed. By the high wall which ran around the Warren grounds I parked the car, and we climbed out.

The tall iron gate was closed, though not locked. As we came up the path, the dark mass of the house loomed up before us, silent and without a light. The path through the trees had a silver streak of moonlight running down its center. When we came to the hill upon which stood the eight-sided library, I was surprised to find that the building was dark. I whispered to Bartley that I thought the chief had said he had left a policeman on guard, only to have Bartley answer that the chief had decided it was no longer necessary.

The door of the library was locked, but Bartley produced from his pocket a little steel instrument, and with the ray from the flashlight on the lock quickly opened it. We slid into the dark room, closing the door behind us. Bartley turned on the light, and we gave one hurried look around the room.

I had noticed on my other visits to the library the

small tables upon which had stood three boxes. They were not the ordinary type of a box, but very highly finished, with carvings of dragons and odd animals all over their sides. The wood of each of them was stained dark with age until they were almost black in color. I had noticed these three boxes as they stood on the three tables, but I had not been interested in them, chiefly because of the fact that I had been unable to lift the covers.

All three of the tables, which after all were more stands than anything else, were on the side of the desk nearest the door. Two of them were over to the extreme left, near the bookcases, the other was more in the center near the safe. It was to this one Bartley hastened, it being the one the chief had mentioned over the phone. For several moments we stood looking down at it.

The box was dingy with the years—a box three feet at least in length and several feet high. The edges were weird dragons, the tails at the corners making the little rests upon which the casket stood. Bartley reached out his hand and tried to open the massive gold lock, but without success. The casket was securely locked. He stood looking at it for a moment, then picked it up in his two hands. I could tell by the look he gave us that it was heavy. He placed it again on the stand, and then glanced around the room.

As his eyes fell upon the other two caskets, he crossed the room to look at them, we following. It needed but a glance to see that they were alike in every particular—made of the same kind of wood, with the

identical dragons on each corner; and like the first one we had noticed, they were also locked. After he had lifted each one he turned to us.

"I think we had better make an effort to open that box. In a sense we have no right to do so; but I have a keen desire to know what is inside."

When we returned to the first casket, he found it was not as easy to open as perhaps he had thought. The steel instrument which he used—a thing which would open almost any lock—in the end did its work, but not until the lock had been wrenched away, and a portion of the woodwork broken. Then as he threw up the lid, we came closer to see what was within.

There was no inner cover to the box, for the wood was very thick and another was not needed. At first glance there seemed to be nothing of value. The top was covered with yellow sheets of straw paper, thick heavy paper, which rustled as Bartley lifted them up. And then as he threw the last piece of paper away, he bent over the box and gave a little exclamation.

There seemed at first nothing to become excited over. Only a row of small tins, placed in an orderly line and packed closely together, met my eye—small tins, not very heavy nor large. But as Bartley pulled one from the interior of the box, his eyes met Ranville's and the two men nodded at the same second. Then with the bit of steel he pried off the top of the tin, gazed for a moment at its contents, and then raised it to his nose. One smell, and he passed the tin to me.

It was a small tin of very little weight. Its interior was filled with a dark, thick mass, the color of dark.

molasses. It did not need his words to tell me what he had found. The casket before us was filled with similar tins, and I knew that each one of them contained, as did the one I held in my hand, opium.

Just what we had expected to discover in the casket would have been hard to have said. One thing was true, three very surprised men stood looking silently at the rows of small tins within the box. Though there were not so very many, yet it seemed to be the purest kind of opium; and that meant they were worth a good deal of money. And then Ranville gave a long low whistle and turned to Bartley:

"A bit odd this. Never expected to find anything like it when we came here."

Bartley shook his head, his eyes gravely studying the rows of tins. Then he went over to the two other stands and returned to the great desk with the two caskets under his arms. Without a word he started to pick the locks of these, and after the same difficulty which he had with the first one opened them. When they were opened, there was another surprise for us. These two boxes were empty; they contained nothing, not even a piece of rice paper.

Ranville, after a little start of surprise, seated himself in a chair by the desk and very carefully began to examine the three boxes. To me they seemed just alike—made from the same dark heavy wood with the similar carvings. But he turned them on one end and then another, looking them all over. On the first one, the one in which he had found the opium, he spent the slightest time. Then as though satisfied, he pushed

back his chair and rose to his feet. For a moment he stood looking gravely at the three caskets upon the desk, then he said:

"That first box has a little mark on it that the others do not have."

He picked it up and showed us a narrow line which ran across the feet of two of the dragons. The dragons' tails made the legs upon which the casket stood, and all three boxes were similar—similar save for the one respect; as he pointed out to us, the first box we had opened—the one containing the opium—had the line etched deeply across two of the dragons' legs, the other boxes did not have a mark.

He pointed it out to us, and Bartley shot a questioning look at his face and then slowly nodded. Their eyes met, and Ranville after another glance at the three boxes explained:

"I don't know much about this chap Warren, but I am a bit sure that there is one thing we can agree upon. It is: he never knew what was in that casket."

"Then why did he have it in his library?" I shot out.

"That is what we do not know," came the reply. "But it is absurd to think that a man of his wealth and his position would be engaged in smuggling opium."

The Englishman paused as if satisfied by what he had said, and Bartley added:

"And you can be rather sure of another thing, Ranville, Warren would not have placed that box in such a prominent position if he had any idea what was in it. For that matter, why were the other two boxes empty?

You have only to look at the locks to see it is very much to be doubted if a key has ever been used on any of them."

"But the Chinaman knew what was in the casket," I ventured.

"Of course, he did," Bartley commented. "And that is as mysterious as the finding of the opium. He not only knew, but also knew there was nothing in the other boxes."

The two men debated for a while as to just what they had better do. Ranville was of the opinion it might be well to call the chief and tell what had been found. But Bartley remarked that the chief would be in bed, and added that he would not be the man to throw any light upon the affair. To this Ranville agreed, though he did suggest that the chief might be able to discover from the gardener the time and place he was to have met the Chinaman.

In the end they decided to take the box which contained the opium back to Carter's and to say nothing about it until we had seen Niles Patton. Patton was to arrive in the morning to set to work upon his task of completing Warren's book. As he had been his assistant in China, he might know something regarding the boxes. Bartley insisted that we would discover they had just been brought by Warren on his return from his last expedition.

Bartley took the box under his arm, and we left the library, first putting out the lights. Though he had opened the door by picking the lock, yet he had not damaged it, and we were able to lock it. Silently we

went down the path between the two hedges—a path now dark as the moon had set.

When we reached the house, I placed the car in the garage, leaving the dog to keep it company. Bartley and Ranville had left me at the drive, and when I came out of the garage, I saw they had turned on the lights in the living room. Through the wide glass window I could see Bartley as he placed the casket on the living room table.

I stood for a moment outside the garage. It was very still. Far away the whistle of a train rose and fell before it died away. Then save for the low murmur of the water on the shore there was not a sound. It was also dark; the moon had disappeared, and the few stars were hidden by low-hanging clouds. Through the dark shadows cast by the trees I could catch a glimpse of the street lights, but save for those the yard was a dense shadow.

For a while I stood by the edge of the lawn, though just why I did not go to the house would have been hard to say. The slight breeze from the lake felt cool, and something about the darkness and the silence appealed to me. And then, just as I was about to go up the path, there came a sound; it was not a loud noise. Perhaps if I had not been turned in the direction of the lake at that moment, I would not have heard it. My ears had caught the sound of the click of an oar out on the lake.

Rather surprised, for it was almost one o'clock, I went around the side of the garage and stopped by the water's edge. Peering out across the lake, I tried to

discover the boat from which the sound had come. But the darkness was too dense, and I could see but a few feet from the shore. Then, as I listened, once again there came the click of the oar against the oarlock. Far out on the lake some one was rowing a boat.

It seemed rather a curious thing that any one should be out on the lake at this time of the night. Just where they were I could not tell, for the darkness could not be pierced, and the boat was carrying no light. But as I caught the sound of the oars, I judged they must be directly opposite me. And then as I listened, the sound died away, and though I waited for some minutes longer, I did not hear it again.

When I entered the living room, Bartley commented on the length of time it had taken me to put up the car. I told him of the boat I had heard, but he made no reply. Perhaps he might have said something if Ranville had not come into the room bearing three glasses for what he called a bedtime drink. With the sober air men have when they go through the sacred rite of a drink, we swallowed our Scotch and decided that it was time to go to bed.

Ranville locked the front door, put down the windows, and we went up the wide stairs to our sleeping rooms. Bartley and I had adjoining bedrooms, and while I was undressing I wandered back and forth between the two. Then as Bartley put out his light, I went back into my room and at length climbed into bed.

I should have been sleepy, but as the moments went by sleep became the last thing I desired. I tossed

back and forth on the bed becoming more wide awake every moment. In sheer disgust I tried various things which are said to bring sleep. I counted to several hundred then closed my eyes and tried to see the sheep jumping the fence. But as I saw no sheep, the effort was not a success. At last in sheer disgust I rolled over on my back and lay staring in the darkness.

It was very still. From a distance came the weird hoot of an owl. Once a car went past in the road before the house. Then far away I heard a clock in the village strike two. But sleep would not come. Then as there fell an utter silence, I reached the point where every nerve was straining, hoping for a sound. Very suddenly the sound came—causing me to sit upright in my bed.

It was not a sound which came floating in from the open windows. Instead, it came from the house—from below my room; a sound which lasted but a few seconds, then died away, and silence fell again. But when I heard it, I knew no noise of that kind should have disturbed me, for from below I had heard the crash of a chair—a chair falling to the floor.

Sitting tense and upright in the bed, I listened for a moment. There came no other noise—only the soft rustling of the trees outside my window. Slipping out of bed, I went softly across the floor and into Bartley's room. By the side of his bed I paused. I could hear his low breathing as I gently shook his arm to waken him. In a moment he stirred, and when I knew he was awake, I told him what I had heard. The next second he was out of bed.

The room was very dark, and I could not see him. But I heard him go to his table and open a drawer. Then he came back to my side and whispered:

"We will get Ranville. As we have to go out in the hall, make no sound."

The hall was very wide, and the stairs came up in a wide sweep from the first floor. Our rooms were about half-way down the hallway, with Ranville's at the extreme end. Bartley opened the door so silently that I did not hear a sound; then with our hands on the wall we crept slowly down the hall. We found Ranville's door slightly ajar, and after we slipped into the room Bartley gently closed it.

Ranville was sleeping very soundly, and Bartley had to shake him many times before he roused him. He woke slowly, saying something in a very sleepy voice. Then as he became wide awake, his tone became crisp as he wanted to know what was the matter. In a few words Bartley told him how I had heard a chair fall over in the living room. And then through the darkness came the eager whisper of the Englishman.

"Where did you put that box of opium?"

I heard a low chuckle from Bartley as he whispered back that it was well hidden in his own room. Then as Ranville slid out of bed, he asked what we should do. Bartley's answer was quick and low:

"Of course, there must have been some one down stairs when the chair crashed. That is, unless Pelt was dreaming. Now you know professional thieves leave the door open for a fast getaway. I am going to slide out of your window, Ranville, along the roof

of the veranda. You and Pelt can go downstairs, first giving me a moment's start. I want to be by the front door. When you get to the living room, try and turn on the lights. Take your gun and your flashlight."

Ranville went to his bureau, fumbled a moment in the dark, and came back to our side. He said in a low voice that he had his gun and the light. Then Bartley went over by the window. We could not see him very clearly, only as a darker shadow against the blackness. But we heard him as he took the screen out, and there came a soft scraping sound as he went out on the roof. As this died away, Ranville whispered:

"Come on, Pelt," and started for the door.

Out in the hall we paused a moment to listen, but no sound came to our ears. With my hand against the wall I crept softly down its length until we came to the rail of the stairs which led to the first floor. Again we paused, but heard nothing. Then very carefully, one step at a time, we went down the stairs, pausing at each step to listen. We reached the bottom of the stairs without hearing anything.

The hall was very wide. On the right was the great living room, which ran the entire length of the house. On the left was a dining room and a small library. The living room was directly under the room in which I slept, and the sound of the falling chair had come from there. There was a wide double door, and I knew that the doors were open. But when, after going very carefully down the hall, we reached the doorway, we discovered as we put out our hands that it was closed.

This rather startled me for a second though I knew

they could not be locked; there was no kind of a lock on the door. Whoever had entered the room had closed the doors, no doubt to prevent any sound being heard. I felt Ranville's hand as it went searching over the surface of the door and as it slid over my fingers. Then slowly I felt the door open as he pushed against it—open until we were able to slip into the room.

As we paused inside the door for a second, we saw and heard nothing. Then at the extreme end of the room in the place where Carter had a large cabinet, we saw the flicker of a flashlight—saw it for a moment as it swept over the surface of the cabinet then it suddenly died away. Some one was in the room directly across from us.

With a pressure upon my arm Ranville started around the wall to the right; I realized he wished to get to the windows to prevent any chance of escape. With but a second's hesitancy I went around to the left. Carefully and very slowly, with one hand on the wall, I crept along. I had no gun, no flashlight, and every second I was regretting it. I could hear the figure by the cabinet as it fumbled at the glass door, but that was all.

And then I paused stiffening to attention. Again there came the circle of light as it played over the cabinet. And then as if roused by some sound it began to sweep across the room. I watched the round circle of light as it swept over chairs and tables, creeping closer and closer to the windows. Then, as for the barest second I saw it flash over Ranville's feet, there came his voice:

"Put up your hands or I shoot!" And as the light clicked off, I heard the sound of running feet, and there came the sharp echo of Ranville's gun.

The sound of the gun in the small room was deafening. For a moment after it died away I could hear nothing else. But in that moment Ranville must have leaped for the lights and found them, for the next instant the room was a blaze of brightness, so much so that for a while I could barely see. When I was able to look around the room, it was only to see Ranville's eager face as his eyes swept every bit of furniture. Save for myself and the Englishman the room was empty.

As we turned to glance at each other, there came the sharp bang of the front door. All at once Trouble out in the garage began to bark—deep, sinister barks, which became louder every second. Our eyes met, and then we rushed out into the hall, down its length and out to the door. Reaching it first I flung it wide and stumbled out onto the veranda. As I reached it I heard the sound of two men—two men struggling on the grass below.

I ran back into the hall as Ranville hurried down the veranda steps. I was searching for the button of the porch light, and it seemed as if I could never find it. But find it I did, gave it one push, and the next instant the veranda was as light as day. Running out to the top of the steps I was just in time to see Bartley coming up their length—coming slowly and not alone.

His pajamas were stained by the dirt and the grass. In one hand was his revolver which was shoved against

the back of the man who walked in front of him—a man who walked slowly and reluctantly, a man whose face I could not see. He was a tall man whose hands were hidden by his side and who wore a dark suit. For a moment I wondered who it might be. Then there began to come a dawning recognition.

Up the steps they came, and Bartley's face was very set. At the top step the man hesitated, only to have Bartley utter a sharp command and push against his back with the revolver. Then as they reached my side, the man lifted his head and looked at me. With one glance I recognized him. There before me, his yellow face calm as if he had just come from a pleasure trip, yet with his dark eyes flashing, was the gentleman who had visited us a while before. The Chinaman stood before us.

CHAPTER XIII

WE HEAR A STORY—AND—DISCOVER IT IS TRUE

No one spoke for a moment. Perhaps we were all too surprised to say anything. The calmest one of all was the oriental. His black suit was rumpled and covered with dirt from the path, but his face was calm and impassive. Only the narrow eyes gave any hint of feeling, and the glare in them was not a pleasant one. Then as with a short command Bartley pushed the gun closer against the man's back, we went into the house, down the hall, and into the living room.

As we dropped into chairs, Bartley motioned to his prisoner to be seated. With a slight shrug of his shoulders the Chinaman sank into his seat. Never taking his eyes off him, Bartley walked over to the chair near the table, directly opposite. As he seated himself, the revolver in his lap, the two men eyed each other in a long questioning gaze. There seemed more curiosity in the almond-shaped eyes than fear.

With a little gesture, the Chinaman murmured:

"If it had not been for a chair—"

There came no reply from Bartley. Ranville was studying the oriental with a deliberateness which took in every feature, as though he was trying to remember if he had ever seen him in London. And then all at

once the man spoke again. His voice was cool and low as if he were making a social call.

"You know I told you before that I know nothing about the murder of Mr. Warren."

Bartley shot out but one word, "Maybe."

Again the eyes of the two men met and for a moment their glances held. Then the Chinaman dropped his eyes to his hands. The long fingers folded and unfolded as though he were playing some game. After a silence he spoke again:

"May I ask what you plan to do with me?"

"That depends," was Bartley's slow response.

I saw a sudden gleam of interest come into the yellow face, and then it became as impassive as before. One thing was certain: there was not a trace of fear in his manner though it seemed to me he was rather curious as to who Bartley might be. Again he looked at him, and then ventured:

"What is it you wish me to tell you?"

Bartley's voice was very impersonal as he replied:

"I am not sure I wish you to tell me anything; but if you do wish to speak, you might explain how that box of opium got into Warren's possession."

It was not a smile that passed over the Chinaman's face, though his features did move a little. For a moment he let his head sink back against his chair and his eyes partly closed as if he was thinking. Then suddenly he sat upright and said:

"I am perfectly willing to tell you that. It is really very simple. Mr. Warren was given six boxes by a certain gentleman he met in China. They were rare

and old; three were for himself; the other three he was asked to bring as a gift from this man to a friend of his in America."

He paused as if reflecting and as he did not speak for a moment, Bartley suggested:

"And three of them contained opium."

The Chinaman made a slight bow.

"Your wisdom is indeed great," was the reply. "Three of them did. When they were given Mr. Warren, just as he was about to sail for America, he was told that the keys of the boxes were lost. But he was told they would be sent, and should reach him before he unpacked his goods. As they were all coming in duty free because of his scientific standing this man knew that the boxes would not be opened. So marking the three which contained opium, he simply used the scientist as the carrying agent."

Again he paused, and we could tell that he did not care to say anything more. The story seemed logical. In the hurry and confusion of Warren's departure from China, the six boxes would not be examined very carefully. The story of the lost keys would seem so reasonable that there was not much of a chance Warren would open the boxes. His baggage would come in without examination. I could well understand how the plan to send opium in the three boxes would work. But there was something else; one of the boxes must have gone astray. And as if reading my thoughts Bartley said: "And I presume that through some accident Mr. Warren in delivering the three boxes made a mistake—sent one of the three which was given to him."

The Chinaman simply nodded, and the thin lips shut as if he had made up his mind to talk no more. There were a number of other things we wished to know. Who was the man who had received the three boxes from Warren? And above all who was this Chinaman before us? But though Bartley did his best to have the man answer these questions, he had no success. To them all there came but a bland smile and silence.

Somewhere in the house a clock struck three, and as if realizing the hour, Bartley motioned to me and said:

"Get the chief, Pelt. Have him come up here with an officer and take this man away."

The Chinaman gave a little start, but whatever he might have felt was not shown in his face. For a moment he studied his hands then raised his eyes and said:

"But after all I have done nothing for which I can be given to the police."

"Breaking and entering. Attempted burglary. Possession of a dangerous weapon," checked off Bartley's cool voice.

"So," was the only comment.

I went out into the hall to the telephone. There was some little difficulty in getting the chief. When he did come to the phone, it was a very sleepy voice which said: "Hello." I knew that I had dragged him out of bed. For a moment his voice showed that he did not understand what I was telling him. Then all at once the tone of sleepiness vanished, and he promised to come out as soon as possible.

When I returned to the living room, it was to find

that the situation had not changed. In the chair still sat the Chinaman, his entire figure showing boredom. Across from him was Bartley, the gun in his lap, and his eyes never leaving the man across from him. Just after I had sank down into my chair, the Chinaman asked if he could smoke. As Bartley assented, Ranville took a cigarette from his case and took it over to him, striking the match for him to get his light.

The man leaned back in his chair as coolly as if he was sitting in some club. Through his narrow half-shut eyes he watched the smoke as it curled to the ceiling. But speak he did not, and the glances which he gave us all in turn were very impersonal. Though he knew what we were waiting for yet he showed no anxiety or, for that matter, not the slightest sign of interest.

At length, just when I was beginning to wonder if they would ever come, there was the sound of a car—a car which came up the drive. In a bored manner Ranville rose to his feet and went out into the hall. He returned in a second with the chief followed by one of the village policemen. The chief's hair was unbrushed and he was wearing no hat. It needed but a glance to tell that his being roused from a sound sleep had not improved his disposition.

He came into the room with the heavy swaying walk he had, but paused when he had his first glimpse of the Chinaman sitting in the chair. After a few words with Bartley he went over to the oriental and touched him on the shoulder. At the touch the Chinaman muttered something in Chinese. His eyes flared but with-

out protest he rose and, obeying the chief's gesture, started to the door.

With a word to his policeman the chief turned to Bartley. He was informed I had given him all the information he needed. The Chinaman had been caught in the house and a charge of attempted burglary could stand on the docket. But he very strongly urged the chief to keep a careful eye on the man until he had him in jail. To this the chief grunted some reply and with revolver in hand started for the door. Reaching it he gave the Chinaman a command, and they went out with him between the chief and his policeman.

As the sound of their car died away Ranville turned to Bartley:

"Wager you a couple of pounds if they are not careful that chap never reaches the police station. He is a pretty cold proposition."

Bartley agreed to this, and then I asked him if he believed the story the man had told. He was silent for a while as if running it over in his mind then replied:

"I think in the main he probably told the truth. Don't you, Ranville?"

Ranville admitted he thought that was so. Within certain limits the man had told the truth but not all the truth. He said that he thought his explanation as to why Warren had in his possession a box containing opium was the truth. And he agreed also that unless one wished to think the scientist was engaged in smuggling the stuff there could be no other reasonable explanation. But there were a few other things he wanted to know. First, did the Chinaman know any-

thing about the murder? Was his story of finding the door of the library open, and then walking in and discovering Warren dead, true? If it was, he could see nothing unreasonable in the fact the man never notified the authorities that he had found a murdered man. He might be held under suspicion himself and to a Chinese mind the murder anyway was none of his affair. It was because of this, because also he had told us the story of the discovery of the body, that he had an idea the man knew nothing about the murder itself. That was his idea but after all he was not sure.

It was at this point I broke into his rather disconnected monologue to say:

"I don't think the Chinaman would ever have cut that cross in Warren's forehead."

There came one astonished look from Bartley, and he burst out:

"What cross? What under heavens are you talking about?"

It had never dawned upon me Bartley did not know about the two faint lines which had been scratched into the dead man's forehead. And then I remembered he had read only the newspaper accounts and they had not mentioned the cross. The coroner even had not brought it to the attention of the jury. So I told him what I had found. For some reason it seemed to interest him even more than I had expected. He asked a hundred questions, and in the end became very thoughtful. At last he turned to Ranville:

"You're right," he said. "The Chinaman never killed Warren. No man of that race I have ever known has

marked his victim after death in such a manner. They will torture their victims sometimes with fiendish cruelty. They will put them to death in the most devilish and grewsome fashions, but they do not mark them in that way. You are right I guess, Ranville. It was not a crime committed by any Chinaman. It might have been a crime committed by another type of person. The sort that—”

Suddenly the telephone broke in on him with a long shrill ring, stopped for a second and then rang again. With a little look of astonishment Bartley rose from his chair and went out to answer it. We heard his voice as he talked but could not distinguish the words. When he returned to the room, there was a little grin on his face as he turned to Ranville.

“You are right once more.”

The Englishman’s eyebrows lifted, and Bartley half laughed.

“The chief just called. The Chinaman got away from them. They reached the station all right but in some manner I don’t just understand how it was, he managed to slip out of their grasp. He just asked me what to do.”

He paused a moment, listening to the clock which was now striking four; then he yawned and said:

“I told the chief the best thing to do was to go home and go to bed. He won’t find that man to-night. I doubt if he ever finds him. And what’s more, I am going myself to take the advice I gave.”

He started for the hall, and as Ranville rose, I followed his example. We locked the door and went

rather wearily up the stairs. Ranville yawned a good night at our door, and a moment later I was in my bed. It had not only been an exciting night, but also a very perplexing one. For a while I tried to puzzle out the happenings of the evening. Then realizing how tired I was, I turned over and went to sleep.

It was the sun streaming through the open window which awakened me the next morning. For a while I lay thinking over the events of the night before. Then the sound of people in the room below came faintly to my ears. Rising, I took a quick shower and went down to the dining room. To my surprise, the first person I saw when I reached the door was Carter. Across the table from Bartley he was laughing at something that had been said.

He greeted me with a slap on the back, and then introduced the young man by his side—a heavy-set young man, with darkish hair, whose smile was very pleasing as he rose to answer to the name of Niles Patton. As I slipped into my seat at the breakfast table, Carter informed me he had come up on the night train, and that he had been lucky in finding that Patton was on the same train.

For a while the conversation played around many topics—a conversation in which Patton took an active part. He seemed a very likable sort of man, boyish in both looks and mannerisms. He told us that he judged it would not take him so very long to go over Warren's notes, and then began to tell us stories regarding their experience in China. Long before he had finished we had adjourned to the veranda.

When there came a lull in the conversation Ranville turned to Carter and drawled:

"Did you know that the house was broken into last night?"

Carter gave him an amazed look, and in a few words he was informed of what had taken place. Then Ranville went on to tell him of our discovery of a box of opium in Warren's library—a statement which caused Patton to give a sudden start of surprise. With a laugh the Englishman went on to tell of the story the Chinaman had told us regarding these boxes which he claimed were given to Warren.

"Did you know anything of six boxes which were given to Warren just before you sailed to America?" was the question Bartley asked Patton.

The young man turned in his chair and nodded.

"Just a little. There were six boxes, about three feet long, as I remember. Some one gave them to Warren, though who it was I do not know. I know they came along just as we were about to sail and I had to find a place for them in our baggage. Mr. Warren said they were rare examples of Chinese woodwork and seemed pleased to get them. But who gave them to him I have not the slightest idea."

"There were six of them," commented Ranville.

"Oh, yes," came Patton's reply. "Six, all alike. Three of them were being brought by Mr. Warren to some one in Washington. But he never told me who it was."

Carter, who had been listening carefully, gave a little laugh as he made his contribution to the subject.

"There is always some new plan being used to get opium into the country. The Revenue men tell me they have their troubles. But this was not so bad. Warren, of course, would bring in all of his goods without having to go through the customs. We do that always with big explorers. Those three boxes to the unknown man could have contained a good many thousands of dollars' worth of the drug. Only it seems there was a mistake, and they received one box which should have remained with Warren."

"You are sure there is no way you can discover to whom Warren was to give those boxes, Patton?" was Bartley's question.

The young man shook his head.

"None that I know of now. Mr. Warren must have done it himself. They went down to Washington with him I know that. But what he did with them I have not the slightest idea."

We must have talked for over an hour, for it was around ten when Patton gave a look at his watch and, rising hurriedly, said he had better be getting over to Warren's library. He added that he would spend the day in finding out just what had been done on the book, and asked the telephone address of the girl who had acted as the secretary. As he rose, Carter got up with him and said he would drive him over, first reminding him that we expected him at dinner around seven.

The two men had gone down the steps and were by the garage door when Bartley suddenly rose and, calling to Patton, went down on the lawn to his side. For a few moments the two men talked and I could tell

from Bartley's manner that he was very serious. Then I saw Patton slowly nod his head, heard him say, "Yes," and the next moment he climbed into the car, which Carter had run out of the garage. As they drove out of the yard, Bartley stood watching them and after they had turned into the road he came slowly up the steps. His face was grave and at the same time rather troubled. As I started to ask him what was the matter his expression changed. He turned to Ranville and myself and said:

"Well, what about a little golf?"

CHAPTER XIV

PATTON TELEPHONES—"IT'S MURDER"

RANVILLE, at the invitation to play golf, informed us very earnestly that he did not care for the game. So, leaving him with his nose buried deep in a magazine, we went out to the car. The morning was cool, with a breeze sweeping across the lake from the distant hills. Forty-five minutes later we drove up the sweeping road which led to the club house.

As we waited our turn to drive off from the first tee, I sank on the bench and studied the view before me. The club house was on a small elevation, and one could take in the countryside for miles around. The lake lay several miles away, its surface dark blue. Six miles in front of us we could see the church steeples in the town as they peered through the leaves of the trees. Across the lake the mountains stood forth etched into sharp lines by the clear air.

Golf was a game Bartley loved but one which, strange to say, he failed to play very well. Sometimes his game would be wonderful, at other times directly opposite. He started out with his first drive by one of the worst slices I have ever seen—one which took his ball off the fairway, across the rough and on to the fairway of another hole. When he sank the ball into the first hole with his eighth shot, he turned to give me a little grin.

By the time we had reached the fifth hole, his score was approaching forty. I had seen him play some rather poor golf, but never such a game as he was playing to-day. When the ball had dropped into the sixth hole, he motioned to me and walked over to a clump of trees by the side of the course. As he flung himself down upon the ground, I followed his example, wondering why he had interrupted his game. He took a cigarette from a case, which he passed to me, lighted it, and then said:

"I have been wondering, Pelt, if you told me everything that you observed that night you found Warren dead in his library. From what Ranville and the chief tell me, there have been no clews of any sort. Not a thing which would point to any particular person as the murderer. In a sense that is unusual. And as I have run this thing over in my mind, I have been wondering—wondering if there is anything which you did not tell me."

I assured him that he must know, either from what I had told him or Ranville, everything that was of importance. But he shook his head as if he did not agree. He suggested I start in at the beginning and tell him the story as if he was hearing it for the first time. And so, carefully picking my words, I started to tell him of everything we had seen from the time we left the house until after we had found the body. When I came to the place where I said the body lay in a queer position on the floor he stopped me.

"There is something new, Pelt. What do you mean by a queer position?"

"Why, the arms were extended from the body," was my reply.

He gave me one look, and then drew a figure with the end of his golf stick—a figure upon the grass in the shape of a cross.

"Like that?" he asked.

I nodded, and as he said nothing, added I had told Carter it seemed impossible for a man to fall in such a position. For a moment I saw his face become very thoughtful, and then he said:

"You are right about that, Pelt. He was struck by a dagger—struck suddenly through the heart. When he fell from his chair to the floor, the odds were a thousand to one against his falling in that position."

Across the green a squirrel dashed down a tree, ran across the grass and scampered up another tree. Bartley watched it with a very peculiar expression on his face. Then he turned to me:

"As I understand it, Pelt, the Chinaman was at the library just before six o'clock. He says the door was open, and that he found Warren dead. Let us believe the story. The housekeeper was at the library sometime between six and seven. She found the door locked; what is more, she claimed she thought she heard some one in the building. That may not be so; her fear and nervousness might have suggested it."

All at once I remembered the gardener had testified at the inquest that as he came from his work after six he saw a boat just rounding the point. I mentioned this, reminding him that the point was below the library. He thought this over for a while, then asked

what time it was the boy who had been picking berries had seen the figure on the wall.

"Just before six," I said. "He told me the whistle in the town blew a moment after the man dropped on the ground. He went down the other side of the wall."

"He meant that the man went along the wall outside of the Warren grounds?"

I nodded. Very slowly he took a cigar and lighted it, blowing the first ring carefully. Then he said thoughtfully:

"That may mean one thing."

"What?" I asked.

"We may have to juggle the time limit a little," he commented. "But suppose we assume this—Warren was killed before six; the murderer did leave the door open. Perhaps it was because he saw the Chinaman coming up the hill. If he did, he went out the back door and returned when the oriental left. When he climbed the wall, he threw the dagger into the swamp, dropped on the ground and followed the wall down to the shore. Here he had a boat, and as he was going away, was seen by the gardener. In fact the gardener must have been coming across the grounds, inside the wall, when this person was going down to the shore, outside."

"But who closed the door of the library?" I ventured.

"We do not know, of course. But we can make a guess. It would be a very easy matter for this person in the boat to watch the library from the lake. It was on a hill and could be easily seen. Suppose he saw

the gardener. If so, he might return to the shore and go back to the library. Why he went back, I cannot understand. It must have been for some other purpose than to close the doors; that was not necessary. He knew that one person had discovered the murder; but then again it is a very queer crime all the way around."

Though after this he asked me a number of other questions, I could give him nothing which seemed of any importance. For a while we talked, then rising with the remark that he did not feel like playing golf any longer, we walked across the course to the club house. Here we had a drink of ginger ale and then, going to the car, started for the house.

We discovered Ranville in the same position as when we had left. Carter was not in sight, and we found that he had not returned. As we dropped into easy chairs, Ranville drawled out some question about our game, then returned to his magazine. Finally, he flung it aside and, after a glance around, turned to Bartley:

"Have you any ideas about this murder?"

"Have you?" was the retort.

The Englishman smiled as he shook his head, then said:

"A few. Of course, what interests me is to watch the apparent lack of interest the police are taking. That, however, is no doubt due to the fact you have no Central Police System as we do in England. I should think you would be lost without it."

"We are at times," was the dry reply.

"Yes, so I would think," commented Ranville. "You

see that's why this case interested me; I felt there were no clues and such things. And I see that your local police are not familiar with these technical crimes. So I have been mulling it over. First, I thought about the Chinaman, but the way the body had been marked put him out, in my mind."

He shot a look at Bartley, who nodded his agreement; then went on:

"Of course, it would be silly to think the secretary killed him. Then it dawned upon me that after all the thing I perhaps could not understand was the psychology of you Americans. Studying the whole affair, I could not find a motive—" He paused, then smiled, "At least a motive which would suit an Englishman."

Bartley shot him an admiring look, then laughed as he replied:

"And in what you last said is, perhaps, the whole solution of the crime. On the face of it there is no apparent motive in sight. Warren had no enemies one can think of. There seems no apparent reason for killing him. And the whole thing is a matter of—well, perhaps what you call the psychology of us Americans."

I gave him a puzzled look, wondering what under heavens he meant by his remark. But Ranville seemed to find nothing out of the way in it, for he nodded in a very wise manner. I was just on the verge of asking Bartley what he meant when we heard Carter's car drive into the yard. And when he came up the steps, the first thing he asked was if lunch was ready.

It seemed to have turned warmer after lunch, and

we spent the early hours of the afternoon in just lying around. Bartley buried himself in a book, while Carter, after telling us very frankly that he was lazy, went to sleep in the hammock. Ranville, who had some letters he wished to write, vanished to his room, and for several hours the piazza was silent. When at length Bartley flung aside his book, it was to give a glance in my direction and to ask if I cared to take a stroll.

We went rather leisurely out of the yard, turning up the tree-lined sidewalk, and passed the little stone church. I pointed it out to Bartley saying that it was the church of the minister who had visited us. He gave it a curious glance and remarked that the tower divided the church from the rectory. Then he chuckled as he assured me that the minister was, to say the least, a fanatic.

We walked about a mile—until the pavement gave place to a country road, and the summer estates to farmhouses. Then we retraced our steps to the house. For some reason, as we walked back, Bartley was very silent. He seemed to be pondering over something, but what it was I did not know as he gave no indication. As once again we passed the green expanse of lawn which led to the stone church, he stopped. I saw him study the granite building with the ivy climbing over the stones. Then to my surprise he said:

"What do you say if we pay the minister a visit?"

He did not wait for me to make any reply, but started up the winding gravel path which led to the rectory. I followed rather puzzled at his sudden desire to call upon the clergyman. Ministers, as a rule,

were very much out of his line, and as we waited at the rectory steps, I could not but wonder why he wished to see him.

The door was at length opened by a woman. She was a very old lady and extremely deaf. I judged by her appearance that she must be the person who looked after the house, for Carter had told us that he was unmarried. To Bartley's inquiry if the minister was in, she said he was not. I expected Bartley would then turn to go, but instead he suggested that we might wait in the study. She led us into a rather ill-kept room. There were a great many books in the bookcases along the wall, but they were dusty. In fact, the whole room could have been much cleaner. The desk was covered with newspapers, books and pamphlets. Even the chairs were dusty. It needed but a look at the room to understand the housekeeper did not believe that cleanliness was next to Godliness.

The woman excused herself and went out leaving us alone. For a moment Bartley's eyes went over the row of books, and then he went closer to examine them. From their appearance most of them had not been taken from their places in many days. The dust lay thick upon the dingy volumes—volumes which seemed to be mostly theological works, and of a very orthodox character. Of novels and works of science there was not a trace. All the books along the wall dealt with theology.

I watched Bartley pull one of the volumes from the shelf and turn the pages. As his eyes fell upon some sentence, he gave a shrug of his shoulders and

replaced the book. Walking over to the desk, he stood for a moment glancing at the disordered contents. Then he went over to the window and looked out. When he turned, his eyes searched the room as if looking for something, and at length came to rest on a bookcase which was near the door.

It was an old-fashioned bookcase. One of those affairs with glass doors with some kind of figured cloth covering the glass within the case. Not a very large case, and I doubted if there were more than four rows of shelves. This case seemed to interest Bartley, for he went across the floor, and in a moment knelt before it to try the door. Not very much interested, I walked to the window and for a few moments stood looking out. When I turned, it was to discover that the bookcase was open.

I did not bother to go closer to see what the books might be. From where I stood I could see the contents of the four shelves—shelves which were not all filled. But those which were seemed to interest Bartley very much. He pulled first one book and then another forth, only to replace them and take another, finding several over which he spent some time. Then all at once he rose to his feet, closed the glass door, and said we better be going.

Wondering a little why he had not waited until the minister returned, I followed him out into the hall. The woman was washing the windows by the front door, and Bartley explained we were unable to wait any longer. When we reached the open air, he struck across the lawn to the hedge which divided Carter's

estate from the church. He said nothing, walking in a hurried manner. And when we came through the hedge and crossed the grass, he paused in front of the house long enough to say that he was going to take the car and go to town.

As he said nothing regarding my going with him, I went into the house, to find Carter in his library. He asked me where Bartley was, and I told him he was going to town, hearing the sound of his car in the drive as I spoke. Then, as Carter was engaged in writing a letter, I picked up the paper and for a while ran through its contents. There was little news, however, and I soon threw it aside.

When Carter had finished his letter, he dropped into a large chair, and we started to talk—a conversation which was mostly one-sided. He told me Patton had been very much pleased to find, when he reached the library, that the young woman who had been Warren's secretary was there. She had promised to work with him, and, as she knew more about the library than Patton did, her offer had taken quite a load off his mind. Then he suddenly said that he thought he knew why the Chinaman had not taken the box of opium away when he discovered Warren murdered.

That had been one of the things which had puzzled me, that is, if we were to accept the story the man had told as being true. He had found the door of the library open, and Warren dead. The box of opium was his reason for being there; yet he had not taken it, and it had been on the stand all the time. That had rather puzzled me, and when Carter said he thought he

knew why it had been untouched, naturally I asked his reason.

"Well," he grinned, "it is what they call in the mystery yarns 'deduction.' Now, of course, he must have known there was a box in the library which contained opium. He must have known that."

"Right you are," came a voice from the doorway, and Ranville came into the room and dropped into the nearest chair.

"All right then," retorted Carter seriously. "But if he did not take it away with him, it was because he did not know which one of the three boxes it was."

"Not so good," was Ranville's dry comment. He threw one leg over his knee and added: "He might not have been very sure when he went in. But I wager that he knew before he went out."

"What makes you say that?"

"It is very simple to me. He told the gardener to bring him the box near the safe. That was the right one as we discovered. If he did not take the box away, there was a reason why he could not; some one must have been approaching the library or else he did not care to be seen with the large box under his arm."

Carter at length agreed this might be so, and after a while he went up to his room. Ranville and myself talked a few moments, and then he went over to the desk to write a letter. In my chair I dreamed away the moments. The afternoon wore away, and in the silence of the library I half dozed—dozed, to be awakened by a muttered oath from Ranville. As I gave a start, it was to see him looking at a piece of

paper in his hand. As his eyes met mine, he said, with a rather sheepish expression on his face:

"What a confounded ass I have been!"

"What's the matter?" I drawled as I noticed his eyes on the paper he held.

"Why, I forgot all about that bit of paper with the letters; you know—those 'Anani' and that sort of thing."

I had found the paper by Warren's body. The letters had puzzled us at the time, but we had paid very little attention to them. Just what they meant, I had not known nor any one else. But Ranville had placed the paper in his pocket, and then apparently forgotten all about it. Now, in reaching into his pocket, he had found it; and the fact he had forgotten all about it had put him in a decidedly bad humor.

I half laughed as I reminded him that we did not suppress evidence in that manner in the States. He gave me a rueful smile and again wondered what the letters might mean. But I shook my head, saying I had not the slightest idea. While we were arguing about it, Bartley came into the room and asked what we were talking about.

Extending the paper to him, Ranville told how I had found it beside the body. He seemed chagrined as he remarked that he had placed it in his pocket and forgotten all about it. He added that I had said it meant nothing anyway. With a look in my direction, Bartley took the piece of paper, glanced at it, spelled out the words, and suddenly chuckled. Then he slowly spelt out the letters—"Anani—"

"So it means nothing, Pelt?" he asked.

I assured him that it meant nothing in my life. Rising, I said that no word I knew anything about was spelled like that. Again he looked at the paper, then laughed, but the laughter lasted but a second, and his face grew serious. He started to speak, checked himself, and placed the paper in his bill case. Though we asked him what he thought the letters meant, the only reply we received was that he would tell us later.

It was almost six, and at Bartley's suggestion we went to our rooms to be ready for dinner. Patton was to eat with us, and I was eager to hear what he had done during the day. Perhaps deep in my mind was the wish he would inform us what the wonderful discovery was that Warren had made in China.

After a quick shower I dressed and went down to the piazza, where I was joined by the three men. For a while we talked of various people we knew, and then Ranville and Bartley got into a discussion as to where was the best place to eat in London. Then, as there came a lull in the conversation, Carter looked at his watch and said that Patton was late. He was just on the point of saying something else when the telephone in the hall rang shrilly.

As I was nearest the door, I rose and, going into the house, took the receiver from the hook. For a moment I had trouble in hearing the person at the other end. And then all at once the line was clear, and I recognized Patton's voice—broken and hesitating but very much excited and at the same time filled with horror. The first question he asked was who was talking. I told

him and there came a pause. Then came the gasping, excited words in a voice which shook:

“Pelt, for God’s sake, get Bartley and Carter down to the library. I am in here with the gardener, and the man’s dead—murdered.”

I gave a startled cry and stammered out something. What it was I said I do not know; but he was too excited to say more. Then came his voice again, breaking with excitement, as he cried:

“Get them down here quick, Pelt—it is murder.”

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER MURDER

DUMBFOUNDED, I stood holding the receiver, too dazed to even move. Then, frantically, I called Patton's name, though the sharp click which came when he hurriedly placed the receiver on the hook told me he had rung off. Hastily hanging up the receiver, I rushed into the living room and halted by the door. At my sudden appearance, there was a pause in the conversation. Bartley's eyes came to my face, rested, and he rose quickly to his feet, his face very grave.

"What is it?" came his quick question.

"Another murder—at Warren's," I stammered.

I saw Ranville's face stiffen into attention as he slowly rose. Bartley's keen eyes never left my face, and a trace of anxiety swept across his face. Carter looked as though he did not believe me, but he asked quickly:

"Who? What do you mean?"

I told them in a few words of Patton's voice and what he had said. As I named the young professor, I saw that Bartley was not only relieved, but also he seemed rather puzzled. His eyes opened wider when I said he had told me the gardener had been murdered. But at the statement that Patton wanted us to come at once, they all started for the door.

Carter, as he rushed out into the hall, said he would get his big car from the garage. Bartley, with a sharp command to wait a moment while he went to his room, rushed up the stairs. Ranville and myself went out on the veranda and watched Carter rush across the grass and fling open the garage door. Immediately there came the first sharp explosion of the engine, and then it settled into a steady roar. He backed in a sweeping circle to the drive. By the time we reached the lawn Bartley came rushing down the steps with a bag in his hand.

We fell into the car, and almost before we were seated, Carter started with a jerk. Before we reached the street it was in high, and we swept out of the drive in a sharp curve. Then with the car increasing in speed every second we started down the lighted street. Not a word was said. I could see Carter's face, set and determined, as he drove his car, first at forty, then crept to fifty, and settled down around sixty. Down the wide street we swept, with people turning to look at us in amazement as we dashed past them with the siren wide open.

As we came around the bend of the street, where the road led straight as an arrow to Warren's estate, Ranville spoke. He was the first one to speak since we had left the house. And what he said seemed far more spoken to himself than any one else.

"So there is something in the library that some one is after," came his musing voice.

"Of course," Bartley shot back at him. "And what is more, I have been afraid all day that this might hap-

pen. I did not want a murder to take place, but if something did happen—an attack on Patton or a burglary—then it would prove a theory that I have.”

With a glance over his shoulder, Carter shot out:

“Got another one of your hunches, John?”

The car was slowing down. In front of us, through the gathering dusk, loomed the wall which enclosed the Warren estate. As the car stopped and we jumped out, Bartley answered Carter’s question.

“Call it that, Carter,” he said. “I think we will discover something to-night.”

Nothing else was said, and on a half run we rushed through the gate and up the path which led to the house. As we turned to the path which ran through the hedges, I gave one glance back at the house. Through the semi-darkness there came the friendly gleam of a light, but there were no signs of confusion, or of any one about. Up the path we ran, and then, as the hedge ended, we could see the eight-sided library before us.

Every light seemed to be on, and the front door was slightly open. But of Patton we did not see a sign until we rushed into the building. Then we saw him standing silently near the desk. He whirled around as we entered, and I saw a look of relief sweep his face. One thing struck me sharply—in his hand was a revolver—a revolver which he was gripping firmly.

He started down the room to meet us. His face seemed strained, though there was no fear in it. The color had gone out of his cheeks as if there had come some sudden shock. He said nothing, but as we reached

his side, he took us around the desk and pointed to the door at the extreme end of the room. For a moment I saw nothing, and then as I took one step forward, I paused and came to a halt. For there by the door, huddled in a heap on the floor, lay the figure of a man—a man who did not move, a man whose appearance seemed to fill the silent room with dignity, a man whom I knew in a glance was dead.

Silently we went down the length of the room and came to a pause by the body. It was lying on its face, with the feet toward the desk; one hand was reaching forth in a pathetic position as if in the last moment of life it had tried to stretch toward the safety of the open door a few feet away. As I looked at the figure, I was impressed with the fact that the man was wearing a suit very similar to Patton's—of some indescribable dark stuff. Not only that, save for the difference in years, the figure was about the same build and hair almost the same color.

This thought lasted only a moment. Bartley dropped silently to his knees and gently lifted the still head. We bent forward to observe the man's face, and then there passed a glance between Ranville and myself, for the cold face with the staring eyes was that of the man who worked around Warren's place. I started to say something, only to have Bartley speak first.

"He was shot through the heart, from behind. I think he must have been leaving the room when the shot was fired."

He rose to his feet and cast a reflective look back to the desk, then hurried across the floor. Silently we

followed him, and when we reached the desk, we received another surprise. It was a very large desk, with a great deal of room underneath. By its side stood a wastebasket, but the wastebasket was filled to overflowing with small pieces of paper—paper torn into hundreds of small pieces, which spilled over the side of the basket and over the floor—typewritten sheets torn into hundreds of tiny bits.

Bartley picked up a handful of paper and tried to fit some of the pieces together. He found this rather difficult, and then stood looking thoughtfully at the basket. I took several pieces of the paper in my hands and discovered that they once had been part of some typewritten manuscript. Ranville gave one look at the basket, glimpsed the typewritten letters, then glanced hurriedly at the desk.

"It looks as though some one went to considerable effort to destroy a manuscript."

Patton's voice came sharp and quick. "They did; I found that mess of papers on the floor. When I left the room there lay on my desk several hundred pages of Warren's notes. And now—now they are torn to a thousand pieces. And"—he paused—"for the life of me I cannot understand it."

Patton's face, as he looked at the destroyed manuscript, showed that he was facing a situation which was beyond him. Not only was he very much disturbed, but also rather frightened at what had taken place. It was with a great deal of eagerness that he started to answer the request Bartley made—to tell us just what had happened.

"Carter brought me over, you know. I was unable to do very much until the girl, who had acted as Mr. Warren's secretary, came. She came to the library about one and showed me what had been done. I found that Warren had half completed his book. In fact I never looked at any of his material beyond where he had ended. He was half finished, and I thought it would be best to see just what had been done."

Bartley gave a quick look at the pieces of paper upon the floor and asked: "Then this torn paper is simply the notes and materials which Warren used in the first portion of his book?"

"Yes. I left the papers upon the desk when I went out. As I told you, I did not go beyond what Warren had already done. I wanted to become familiar with his plan. For that matter, the untouched notes are still in the safe. But when I returned to the library, I found the condition which you see."

"It looks as if some one simply destroyed those papers in a fit of rage," was Carter's comment.

I saw Ranville turn to Bartley and their eyes met; but they said nothing, and it was Patton's excited voice which broke the silence:

"That's right, Carter. Of all fool things, the biggest one was to destroy that mass of notes I left on the desk. The manuscript of the book, the half which Warren had completed, is still in the safe."

"You say you left the library?"

Patton nodded. "Yes; about five o'clock the secretary went home for her lunch. She was to return again

in an hour. I remembered what you told me—not to leave the library unguarded if I went out.”

“What!” came Carter’s startled voice as he turned to Bartley. “Do you mean to tell me you expected something like this to happen?”

Bartley’s eyes went down the length of the room to the still figure at the door. There was a note of sorrow in his voice as he replied briefly:

“I expected something.”

Carter gave a start, his face expressing a good deal of amazement. The Englishman, however, did not seem at all surprised by what had been said. And then Patton went on to tell why he had left the library. It was a very simple thing; he wanted some tobacco and he discovered that he had none in his pockets. Not finding any in the library, he went out leaving the door open. That was a little after five. Down by the iron gate he found the gardener and asked him to go and stay in the library until he returned. This was the first hint I had received that the gardener was still working on the estate.

The gardener had said that he would go in a moment or so, adding that no one could reach the building without passing up the path. With this, Patton had wandered down the street to the business section and had gone into the first store he noticed, bought tobacco and an evening paper. As he figured it, he was not away from the grounds more than thirty or forty minutes, returning directly after making his purchase. When he came up the path and entered the library, the first thing

he saw was the hundreds of bits of paper on the floor, and that the manuscript was destroyed.

That was the first thing. Almost in the same moment he saw the figure lying by the rear door. He ran over to its side—to discover it was the gardener and that he was dead—shot. He was so dazed for a moment that he did nothing. Then he went to the phone and called us.

It was a simple story, and yet an amazing one. That in the space of one hour—in the time it took Patton to go to a store and buy some tobacco—another murder had been committed in the scientist's library; it seemed almost beyond belief. But that the gardener—a simple-minded man of his type—should be the victim was even more startling. I started to voice my thought, but Carter was ahead of me.

"But, John! Why—why under God should any person kill that gardener?"

"They never intended to kill the gardener," came Ranville's dry voice.

Bartley gave him a keen look, commenting:

"Ranville is right. No one ever intended to kill the gardener. They wanted—that is, if they wished to kill any one—to murder Patton."

"But," came Patton's wailing voice, "why should any one wish to kill me?"

Bartley's eyes met Ranville's, and it was the Englishman who spoke:

"I am not so sure that they intended to kill you, Patton. Though if any one was to be killed, why you were the logical victim. What I think happened

was this: they thought they killed you. You and the gardener are about the same build. You are both wearing a dark suit to-day, and your height is the same. When they shot at that man, they thought they were shooting you."

"But—" Patton started in a bewildered voice. He was interrupted by Bartley's statement:

"Ranville is right, I think; but we might go even further. It is my idea that the murderer never discovered who it was he killed. He thought he killed Patton."

"How do you make that out?" was Carter's question.

"I may be wrong, you understand. But it seems to me something like this happened. The gardener, when he said he could see any one come up the path, forgot it was an easy matter for a person to land on the shore in a boat. The trees would hide him from any person down by the gate. I have an idea also that the gardener never hurried about coming to the library. He took his own time and for some unknown reason went to the back door instead of the front one."

"I don't see how you make that out," broke in Patton.

"Look where he was killed," came the quick response from Ranville.

"Yes," said Bartley slowly. "Look where the body was lying. You find it on its face with one hand reaching for the door—the open door only a few inches away. The man was shot in the back while his face was turned away from the person who shot him. He fell, naturally, in the position in which we found him.

And that makes me think the gardener came in the rear door, got several feet within the building, when all at once he saw the person engaged in destroying the manuscript."

"But why did he turn to leave then?" was my question.

"It is my idea that when he turned to get out of the library, the other person had not seen him. Perhaps, even, the gardener knew who it was. He managed to go several feet before the man fired. I believe when he fired and the man fell and did not stir, he thought he had killed Patton. From the back, with the same colored suit, and the same general build, they look a bit alike."

It seemed logical enough, and I could tell from the men's faces that they agreed. Then all at once Carter gave a sudden cry and said that we must get the chief. He started for the telephone, only to have Bartley call out to him:

"George, don't tell the chief what we want him for. Tell him to come right up here, but say nothing about the murder. I have my reasons."

Carter shrugged his shoulders and, after fooling with the phone for some time, managed to get the chief. When he returned to our side, he said the chief was puzzled, wishing to know for what he was wanted, but he would come up right away.

With this, we started to examine the room. But after a quick, though very careful, search on the part of Ranville and Bartley, there was nothing of importance found. Only the small pieces of torn paper, which

filled the wastebasket and littered the floor by the desk, showed that anything had been touched. There was no doubt these pieces of paper had once comprised Warren's notes—the notes which Patton said he had left on the desk.

As we went over to the front door, Ranville, who was in the lead, bent over, and as he straightened up, held in his hand a magazine—a very popular magazine with a gay cover of a girl in a scanty bathing suit. As Bartley saw it, he gave one glance, then turned to Patton.

"Two questions, Patton. Did you slip on the rug, and did you buy this magazine when you went to the store?"

The rug was a small Turkish one which we had noticed the various times we had been in the library. The colors were so beautiful that no one could help noticing it. It was always just inside the door, but now it was rumpled and disturbed, laying partly across the doorsill. As I looked at it, I decided that some one had slipped upon it.

Patton gave the magazine one glance, then gazed at the rug. He slowly shook his head, saying:

"It is 'no' to both questions."

"Somebody slipped on that rug," commented Carter.

"And when they went out of the room," added Ranville. "It's dragged over the sill. If they stumbled when they entered the room, it would be lying farther inside the library."

He bent a second and then fell to his knees, apparently interested in something he found by the sill.

Scraping the substance with his knife, which he had taken from his pockets, he rose extending his hand to Bartley.

"It's mud," he said.

We came closer to observe. There in his hand were a few bits of dried dirt—dirt which evidently had been wet only a short time ago. As Bartley saw it, he reached forth to crumple a piece of it between his fingers. Then he went out on the veranda and down the three steps to the ground. At the bottom step he bent down and then called:

"You will find more of it here."

On the edge of the bottom step there were unmistakable signs of a muddy shoe. The signs were not plain enough to form a footprint, but one could see that some person in going up the steps must have brushed off the mud from their shoes. Patton gave it one look, then straightened up to say:

"That's not mine. I never went within a mile of any mud."

Bartley was on the verge of a reply when we heard some one hail us at the bottom of the slight hill. Turning, we saw the chief hurrying across the lawn. His face was red as if he had been running, and when he stopped at our side, he gave us a very wondering look. There was no doubt he was very curious as to why he had been called so suddenly again to the library.

In a few short words Bartley told him of the dead man that was within. His eyes opened wide at the information, and his jaw dropped when Bartley told him it was the gardener who was dead. Then as he started

for the house, Bartley's hand went forth and touched his arm:

"Chief, don't call up your office for several hours. Get your coroner if you must, but try and get him out here without any one knowing what has taken place."

As the chief turned a puzzled face in his direction and started to protest, Bartley continued:

"I have my reasons, Chief, and they are good. If you keep this thing still for several hours, I have an idea I can come pretty close to putting my hand on the murderer."

We all gave him a startled glance. So far as I could see, not only was Warren's murder destined to become one of the unsolved crimes, but this deepened the mystery. There had been no apparent reason for Warren's death, for the gardener's there was none at all. True, Bartley had said the gardener had been killed in mistake for Patton; but there was no reason in the world why any person should have wished to kill Patton. But here was Bartley calmly saying that he thought he might be able to discover the murderer. And it needed only one look at his set face to know he was sincere in his belief.

Puzzled, though not protesting, the chief agreed to what Bartley had asked, and then turned again to the house. Telling him we would be with him in a few moments, we watched the heavy figure ascend the steps and vanish within the room. Then, when he had passed from our sight, Bartley said:

"Twice we have heard about a boat in connection with this affair. Now, if the murderer wished to enter

the grounds without being seen, it is reasonable to assume he used a boat. The traces of mud that we found show he was in some water. With this dry weather we are having water is hard to find."

With that he started across the lawn and down through the trees. The estate ended by the lake, which was several hundred feet away. Along the edges of the water low-hanging willow trees formed a leafy green screen. The trees were rather close together; a person could have landed on the shore without much chance of being seen by any one who was a few feet away.

We pushed through the branches to find that the shore line was several feet below the grass embankment. Below the grass a soft silt formed the shore, and the water was very shallow for some yards out. As I turned and looked through the low branches—branches which in places dropped below the bank and almost touched the water—I discovered that I could not see the library.

By the water's edge we scattered. Carter and I went down the grass to our right, while Bartley and Ranville followed the shore in the direction to where the wall ended at the water. We had not taken more than four steps when there came Bartley's voice, and we hurried to where he and Ranville were standing.

They were several feet away from the wall. It came, not only down to the water, but extended a few feet into the lake. The heavy stones had caused the water to hollow out a little curve just inside the estate. It was here that Bartley was pointing. Below us the

soft silt—almost mud—extended for several feet into the lake. And there was no doubt, from a deep impression in the mud, that a boat had been run ashore at this very spot. Not only could one see where the boat had landed, but what is more, where some one had jumped for the shore, missed the bank, and had placed one foot in the silt.

“That boat did not leave there so very long ago,” came Ranville’s comment, as we all looked at the impression. “There is a slight breeze on the lake, the water is lapping against the shore, and in an hour that impression in the mud will be all smoothed out.”

Bartley nodded, then bent over the bank to study the impression. He rose with a very perplexed look on his face and began to go slowly over the near-by grass. Suddenly he stopped and turned quickly.

“That’s not all, Ranville. The man in the boat got one foot in the water when he got out. You can see the dirt where it fell from the edge of the bank. But when he came back, he had something with him—something heavy. Maybe he carried it, but he had to half drag it into the boat. Look,” and he pointed to the bank.

There, a little away from the spot where the impression was in the mud, were two places a foot apart—places where the grass was tangled and matted, and where the bank itself was broken down. It did look as though something had been dragged over the bank to the boat. As Bartley looked, his face grew very white, and I saw his hands open and close. He turned to Patton, and his voice was crisp as he shot out:

"Patton, that was not your magazine we found in the library."

Patton shook his head. He might have replied, but Bartley gave him no time. The voice was insistent as he asked:

"You said the girl—the secretary—was to return to the library and work an hour?"

"Why, yes; she went to supper and was to come about six and work until seven. Carter told me we were to eat at seven."

"And you never saw her again after she left?"

"Oh, yes, I did," was Patton's unemotional answer. "Yes, I did. I saw her going up the street toward Warren's when I was in the tobacco store. If I had not stopped to talk for a few moments, I would have been able to catch up with her. Why, what's the matter?"

Bartley's grave glance went to Ranville's face. As the Englishman looked at him, to my surprise I saw the red fade slowly from his face. Very gravely he started to nod his head when there came Bartley's quick voice:

"What's the matter? Good Lord! Don't you see that the girl must have come up the path just about the moment the gardener was shot? Don't you see she must have walked right into the library, perhaps while the murderer held the gun in his hand—perhaps even at the very moment of shooting? She was there; the magazine on the floor was hers."

Carter gave a sudden start, and Patton's face grew white. He was the first to stammer out:

"But where is she now?"

Bartley's eyes swept over the water of the lake and rested on the faint impression in the silt—an impression now almost smoothed out. Then, pointing to the be-draggled grass and the place where the bank was broken, he said slowly:

“She must have been at the front door just as the murder took place. Whoever did the killing dragged the girl down across the lawn and to the boat. Her feet, as they dragged along the grass, broke down the edge of the bank.”

He paused and there came a moment of horrified silence. It needed but one glance at Ranville to see that he agreed with Bartley. From Carter's expression as he gazed at the broken place in the bank, I could tell he believed the same. Only Patton seemed too dazed to comprehend what it might mean.

And then as our glances met, Bartley, for one of the few times in his life, uttered an oath and started to run toward the library. As the rest of us stood, hesitatingly, Bartley turned—turned to cry back at us in a voice that shook a little:

“For God's sake, hurry! We may be just in time to prevent another murder, and this time the most horrible one of all.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE VOICE IN THE DARK

It had been an afternoon filled with unexpected things. But even the murder of the gardener had not startled me as much as the horrified exclamation of Bartley. No one thought of disbelieving him or even questioning what he had said. There would not have been time for the latter, for he was running up the hill in the direction of the library. Without a word Ranville had started after him, and after our first stunned second of surprise Carter, Patton and I followed.

What Bartley had meant by saying we might be in time to prevent another murder I could not understand; but the tone of conviction in his voice when he had said this was overwhelming. He knew something of which the rest of us had not the slightest idea.

He reached the library before we did. In fact, when we went up on the veranda and paused at the open door, he was talking to the chief very seriously and quickly. We had no time to enter the room before he came to our side. Just as we followed him down the steps, he turned and called to the chief, who had come to the door:

"Remember; say nothing to any one about the murder of the gardener. Wait until you hear from me."

We hurried down the path and out to the car waiting before the iron gate. Carter climbed into the front seat, and Ranville and I took the back seat with Bartley. At his command to rush to the house, Carter guided the car around in a sweeping curve, and started down the street. In a moment we were going over fifty miles an hour.

I shot a glance at Bartley. He was leaning back in his seat, but I could tell that his body was tense. There was a burning flame in his eyes, and his lips were shut in a thin line. As the car swept around the bend and then headed straight for Carter's, Ranville asked in a questioning voice:

"You have found something, John?"

There came a quick response. "I think so. It may be that I am wrong. To me it seems the theory I have is the only solution there can be to this case. I had a theory when you told me of Warren's death—a vague one. Now the death of the gardener makes it the only solution in sight."

"It seemed a crazy thing to kill the gardener," was Ranville's comment.

Bartley gave him one quick look. The car was lurching into Carter's drive and was already on the verge of stopping. As it came to a pause, Bartley answered the questioning comment of the Englishman.

"Yes," was the only thing he said.

We piled out of the car onto the lawn. I noticed that Bartley stood a moment, his gaze apparently fixed upon some point. It was already dark, and would soon be much darker. In the sky the clouds were hanging

low and black, with the promise of rain any moment. The wind was rising and already was sweeping across the lake in stormy gusts. Down in the garage the dog, hearing the car stop, howled long and loudly.

For some reason Bartley did not seem to be in the same hurry as a few moments before. We followed him into the house and watched him go up the stairs to his room. Carter, who had been watching him with a puzzled air, turned to me and asked:

"Do you know what is on his mind?"

I shook my head, started to speak, only to hear Bartley from above calling to Carter to be sure and get his gun. With a startled glance at Ranville, Carter gave a shrug of his shoulders and left the room. Both he and Bartley returned at the same moment, and it needed but a glance at the squatty automatic which he carried to see he had obeyed his friend's instructions.

But though he had obeyed it, he was not satisfied. In a voice which was bursting with curiosity he turned to Bartley.

"For God's sake, John! What have you up your sleeve?"

"Carter," came the slow reply, "there is not time to tell you now just what I am afraid of, but I have the idea we are going to put our hands on the murderer of both Warren and the gardener. That is not my chief object. I am going to save the secretary from a similar fate."

"I don't see how you can say that—" burst from Carter's lips.

He would have said more, but his friend placed his arm around his shoulder saying:

"I may be wrong, Carter. But you know my way of working very well. There is but one logical solution to this entire affair; that is the one I am going to test now. If I am wrong, there is no damage done; but if I am right, then I save further trouble. I only ask you to do one thing; do not lose your head. Say nothing, and if you have to shoot, do not be afraid of shooting to kill."

Bartley led the way out of the hall. As we reached the front door, he slipped a revolver in the hands of Ranville and myself. And at that second for the first time I discovered Patton was not with us and had not come into the house when we got out of the car. In a surprised voice I asked where he might be—asked, only to have Bartley respond that Patton was following a suggestion he had made, and that we would see him in a short while.

With Bartley in the lead we went down the steps and across the grass. Where we were going, I did not have the slightest idea and wondered greatly. I half expected we would take the car, but instead he struck off over the lawn in the other direction. This puzzled me, and as we came to the opening in the hedge, I became more perplexed than ever. For the high hedge separated Carter's grounds from the wide sweeping lawn which ran to the stone church.

Even in the few moments we had been in the house, the wind had increased. Now it came sweeping across the lake from the distant mountains—not in the wild

gusts of a few moments before, but with a steady strength which seemed to be increasing. A few drops of rain dashed against my face, and I could hear the lake as it started to pound upon the shore. The clouds seemed very low, and not a star was in the sky.

As we came through the hedge, for the first time we felt the full strength of the wind. Out in the street, where the few street lamps gave the only brightness in the dense darkness, I saw a newspaper go whirling up the hill in a crazy fashion. In front of us, just an indistinct dark mass in the gloom, was the church. No lights were to be seen at the rectory windows, and save for the wind no other sound came to our ears.

With Bartley a few steps in front of us, we went up the slight incline and across the close-cropped grass which formed the lawn. Where we were heading, I could not tell; but Bartley kept in the lead, hurrying with the certainty of a man who knew just where he was going and what he expected to discover. We followed, though several feet behind. No one spoke, and as we bent forward against the wind, I wondered what Carter and Ranville might be thinking.

We paused under the shadow of the tower, which divided the church from the rectory. It loomed above us in the darkness, but as I put out my hand, I discovered that the door leading to the top was closed. I pressed down the latch, only to find the door was locked. I had begun to wonder why we had stopped in the place we did when above the roar of the wind I heard a sound. At first I could not tell what it was, for it rose for a second and died away—rose and fell, to suddenly

swell forth into a great volume of sound. And then I recognized what it was. Some one was playing the organ in the church.

Ranville started to speak, and in fact said one word, but there came a sharp command from Bartley, and he became silent. As Bartley started in the direction of the church, we followed. We crept along the ivy-covered wall and reached the three steps which led to the entrance. When we were before the oak door and tried the latch, we found it was locked. Stopping a moment, we listened. Above the wind the notes of the organ came faintly from within.

I half expected Bartley might pound on the door, though why he should care to enter the church I could not see. Instead, he walked down to the grass, and we went to his side. Our eyes turned toward the rich glass windows of the building. In the darkness it was almost impossible to even perceive the place where they were. One thing was certain; though some one was within the church—some one playing upon the pipe organ—yet the church was dark. Not a ray of light was reflected from the windows out into the darkness.

Puzzled by this, we followed Bartley back again to the side of the church, and this time paused directly under one of the windows. It was placed only a few feet above the ground, for the church building was rather low. At Bartley's suggestion I placed myself so he could step on my hand and reach the window sill. Reaching it, he stood balanced against the glass for some moments, then dropped to the ground without a word. Coming to our side, he said shortly:

"There is some one in the church, and there seems to be a light there. But it is a very feeble one at the best. We will go down to the last window. This time we will let Pelt look inside and tell us what he sees."

We went down the side of the church until we reached the last window. Here Bartley aided me as I scrambled up to the sill and stood upon the rather large ledge. The window was partly covered over with ivy, but I found a clear place and pressed my face against the glass. For a while as I looked within, I saw nothing. In fact, the church was simply a vast dark cave, the darkness so dense that I could not distinguish any of the objects within.

But I did discover something else. Somewhere near my ear there must have been a hole in the glass, or a broken section, for the sound of the organ was much louder than when I heard it before. Within the church some one was playing—playing with a feeling and a power which was hard to describe. The loud notes rolled down to my ear, increasing, it seemed, in sound every second. And the music was indescribable, like nothing I had ever heard before and, for that matter, nothing that I would care to hear again.

It seemed to contain a note of victory mingled with some wild, barbaric strain of exaltation; music unlike anything I had ever heard before, and music, which for some unknown reason, made my blood run cold. One thing was certain, whatever was being played it was not the type of music which one hears in a church. The wild, barbaric strains, now shrieking forth in gleeful triumph, now seeming to cry defiance

to one's enemies, was not church music. It was too loud and far too primitive for that. And then, suddenly, I saw something.

With my face pressed against the glass, I had tried to penetrate the darkness within. But the gloom hid everything from sight as if a heavy thick blanket had been drawn across my vision. As my glance swept down the length of the church and then upward, I suddenly saw a light. It was the merest pin point of a light, far up in the organ loft. As I gazed at the speck of brightness in the darkness, I saw something else.

It seemed to me that the light must be from a candle placed somewhere upon the organ. It was so small that it could not give much illumination. From where I was it did not seem much larger than a dollar. But beside the light, mostly in the shadow, could be seen the indistinct figure of a man—a man bent over the keyboard of the organ, his figure swaying back and forth as he played. But it was impossible to distinguish who the man might be.

With the wild notes of the organ ringing in my ears, I dropped to the ground and told what I had observed. Bartley turned at once to the window and, with my assistance, climbed upon the sill. For several moments, with his face against the glass, he remained motionless. Then, sliding to the ground, he came to our side.

"Is there a balcony in the church?" he asked Carter.

Carter thought a moment and replied that he thought there was. Then Bartley said he wished Carter and I to go into the church and to reach the balcony. He and Ranville would join us in a short while. If we succeeded

in getting into the balcony without being heard, we were to simply watch the person playing the organ and wait until Bartley joined us. We started to ask him what he expected would be discovered. He made no reply to the question; instead he said he thought he would be able to pick the lock of the front door of the church.

Wondering just why he wished us to go into the church and, above all, puzzled as to where he and Ranville might be going, we followed him to the church entrance. For a second the flame from his flash light played upon the great door. Then as we screened him, Bartley fumbled for a moment or so with the lock, using a thin piece of steel, and before we knew it the door was open.

With a whisper that we might close the door, as he could open it again, Bartley slipped away in the darkness. Silently, Carter and I stole softly into the church. As we closed the door behind us, we stopped a moment to listen. There came to our ears the muffled sound of the organ, telling us the man was still playing. With a whisper that we did not have to be very careful as the organ would drown out any noise we made, Carter turned on his flash light.

The flame lasted but a moment, but long enough to allow us to get our bearings. We were in the vestibule of the church. On each side of the hallway stairs ran to the other floor, no doubt to a balcony. In the front near the stairs were two doors leading into the church. They were glass doors, but the glass was covered with some sort of cloth.

There was not much necessity to be over quiet. The organ prevented any sound we might make from being heard. We went to the stairs, and with our hands on the wall climbed to the next floor. We crept carefully through several rows of chairs and managed to reach the front railing of the balcony without any noise. There we sank back in the nearest chairs and peered over the rail.

Before us the church stretched away to the organ loft, which was above the pulpit. Below us lay a great pit of darkness, while almost on a level with us we could see the tiny splotch of light—a light which flickered and twisted as the flame of a candle will. It was set somewhere upon the organ, for we could catch the reflection of several of the golden pipes. But the man at the keys we could not distinguish. There was but the black outline of his figure as, with head bent low, he played to the silent church.

As we sat there in the darkness, it dawned upon me that perhaps never again would I hear such music—that is, if one could call the wild strains which came from the organ music. It was unlike anything I have ever heard, wild, fantastic and even devilish in its suggestion. For the first time I began to understand what some people had in mind when they called certain music immoral. Now the tones would swell, swell until the echo reverberated from the wall. Next it would die down to a soft, sobbing croon to last but a moment, and then suddenly burst forth in a wild satanic laugh. It was the eeriest music I have ever heard, and as time passed on, it seemed to frighten me.

Then came a moment when the organ died down to a strain so low we could barely hear it. In that second, suddenly there was a terrific flash of lightning—one which threw the rich glass of the windows in high relief and caused the interior of the church to flare for a moment into sight. Then followed a heavy crash of thunder, which seemed to roll down the roof of the church. The next instant there came the heavy dashing of rain upon the roof above our heads. And all at once, as the sound of the thunder died away, the organ seemed to falter, and the music stopped with a sudden crash. At the same time the light in the organ loft went out.

As the light vanished, Carter gripped my arm. Bending over the railing, I tried to figure out what had happened as if the very tenseness of my gaze could pierce the blackness. A sound behind caused me to jump, but the next instant there came Bartley's low whisper:

"It's all right, Pelt. Keep still."

There came another flash of lightning more vivid than before, which seemed to play across the window above the organ, a window which was blood-red in the second I was able to see it. The clap of thunder which followed appeared to shake the church to its very foundation. And then in that second of silence which seems to follow a thunderclap, there came ringing through the black church a voice—a voice unlike anything I have ever heard. The tone exultant, triumphant, ringing above the sound of the rain upon the roof

and the sweep of the wind around the building. A voice chanting a disconnected series of words.

"A sign, O Lord. A sign to thy servant. The Lord will deliver his enemies into my hands. A sign, O Lord. A sign I cried for. And it came, it came."

The shrill voice rose higher and higher until the broken phrases were almost a shriek. I felt Carter's hand sink into my arm. In his intensity he did not know that his grip was painful. None of us moved, but I heard a short gasp come from some one. And I knew that the eyes of the three were trying, like my own, to pierce the darkness.

The voice died away to a sobbing, whisper, then all became still. Above our heads the rain was dashing in sheets against the roof. Somewhere outside I heard the shrill wail of an automobile—as the driver blew the horn. But within the church was only darkness and silence. Again there came a vivid flash of lightning, followed by the rumble of the thunder. As it died away the voice rose again—rose in a wailing cry:

"A sign to thy servant. A sacrifice to thy power."

Silence again, in which I tried to figure out just where the man might be. That he was somewhere in the front of the church I knew, somewhere near the altar. But why the candle had been extinguished, and above all why he should stay in the darkness I could not tell. Of one thing I was certain. No sane man had been playing the organ. And the voice we had heard had tones and inflections which I had never heard in any normal person.

Again came the voice. This time it was not so shrill,

but far more serious—speaking with the tone of one who was lifted above the world by some mystical vision within them, and yet the tone and the words made me shudder.

“Blood—will wipe away all sins. Blood—” the voice wailed.

I heard a muttered “God” in a horrified voice from Carter. He half started to rise, only to fall back in his seat at Bartley’s whispered command.

The voice came again above the sound of the rain and the noise of the wind—the words came ringing down to us through the darkness:

“Blood will wipe away all sins,” were the words chanted in a singsong voice. “Blood. A sacrifice upon the altar.”

The voice died away. There came a muttering, the words so low that we could not hear a single one. For several moments it went on. Suddenly it ceased, and we heard the sound of some one stumbling down some steps—stumbling and half falling. Then came the sound of feet half running—running down the aisle of the church—running, yet stumbling and falling against the pews. At the sound Bartley whispered:

“Down the stairs! Let the man get out on the lawn, and then follow him. Do not let him see us.”

We groped our way up the short aisle, then down the stairs which led to the vestibule. Just as we reached the turn in the steps, we heard the man fumbling with the front door—heard him fling it open, and then followed the loud bang as the wind slammed it shut. With that we leaped down the remaining steps,

across the hallway to the door. In a second some one had flung it open.

As we piled out on the lawn, the rain swept across our faces. Coming from the dense darkness of the church, we found we could see but a few feet ahead of us. Though we looked on all sides, we saw nothing of the man. Suddenly there came a flash of lightning, and in the glare I saw far down the lawn a running figure—a figure headed for the lake.

We started on a run, Bartley a little in the lead. The lake was several hundred yards away, and above the wind I could hear the water as it dashed against the shore. By the aid of another flash of lightning, we glimpsed for a second the dark figure. This time he was almost by a small building which faced the water.

As we reached Bartley's side, Carter gasped:

"I think I know where the man is going. There is a stone boat house down there."

I wondered later why it was we were not observed, for as the man reached the boat house, we heard him fumble with the lock, and the door was slammed almost in our faces. We stood for a second by the door of the building. It was a small stone affair built of heavy granite blocks. It stood directly upon the shore of the lake, and the water was but a few feet away. As we gazed at the building, suddenly far above our heads came the reflection of a light from within. I gave a start, for the light was directly above us. There came Carter's quick voice:

"John, this place has no windows at all. It was once a studio, and there is a large skylight in the roof.

When I was a kid, I often climbed on the roof and watched the artists working inside."

"Can you get up there now?" questioned Bartley.

"Without any trouble at all," Carter retorted. "On the other side of the building there is a big tree. You can climb the tree, then go out on a branch and drop on the roof. It's easy."

Without a word Bartley rushed around the side of the building, we after him. There we found it was as Carter had said. There was a large tree several yards from the building, and I could see from the light reflected above the roof an overhanging branch. As the limbs hung low, Bartley had no difficulty in climbing, and I saw him drop upon the roof. In rapid succession we followed him. For a moment as the branch swayed with the wind I felt a feeling of suspense, but in a second I dropped lightly on the roof of the building.

A large skylight formed the larger part of the roof. From it a light was streaming out into the night. Bending over the skylight, their eyes intent on something in the room below, were Carter and Bartley. Ranville and myself reached the glass at the same moment and bent forward to look into the room.

In the first glance I noticed nothing out of the way. There was simply a large, unkempt room, littered with old chairs and odds and ends. By the door which faced the lake there was a small rowboat. Then my eyes fell upon a broken-down sofa, which was in one corner of the room and then I gave a quick gasp of horror, for there upon the broken-down piece of furniture lay a

still figure—a person whose eyes were closed and whose face was very white. Below us upon the sofa lay the unconscious figure of the secretary.

My first startled thought was that she was dead. But I saw the breast rise a little and knew that she was breathing. She did not move, however, and her eyes were closed. The white dress was stained with dirt, and half of the thin waist was torn away from her shoulder. One could see the white curve of her arm and the ivory whiteness of the half-exposed breast. Across the naked shoulder was a long red mark, either a cut or a scratch. The dress was far above her knees, and the rolled stockings exposed her legs, which were covered with dirt.

The first startled thought had been one of surprise. Though Bartley had told us that it was his opinion the girl was in danger, yet for my part I had failed to believe him. But as I looked down upon the unconscious figure, I realized he had been right. Some one started to speak when in the rear of the room a door suddenly began to open.

I watched the door as it swung slowly open, and then a man came into the room. His face I could not see, for he entered in a sideways position with the body bent far over. His hair was very much disheveled, and the black suit which he wore was a mass of wrinkles. Slowly, with his head bent low, he shambled over to the sofa and, with the hands hanging down, stood looking at the girl. The face I could not see, but as I looked at the uncouth figure, it began to dawn upon me that I knew who the man was.

Suddenly he raised the long thin arms above his head and waved them in a threatening manner over the unconscious girl. For a few seconds he stood silent, then shuffled to the corner of the room and fumbled under a bit of sail cloth. He straightened, his face still hidden from my sight, and then to my consternation I saw he held in his hand—a knife. As he raised it above his head, the long thin steel caught the reflection from the electric light and glittered in a strange fashion. As if testing the force of his blow, he swept the knife downward through the air and then turned to gaze in a reflective manner at the form on the sofa. At the same second I saw Ranville, who was next to me, pull his revolver from his pocket.

For some reason the man remained quiet a moment, then went very slowly to the opposite corner of the room. From where we were on the roof we were unable to see what he was doing. As I bent my face closer to the glass, Bartley suddenly spoke in a low voice:

“Carter, I am going to take Pelt and go down and break in the door. You remember what I said. If it is necessary, do not be afraid to shoot—and shoot to kill. There may come just a second when it will be a question of taking the life of that insane person below or saving the girl. There is only one choice.”

With a touch on my shoulder to follow him he went over to the branch of the tree and pulled himself along to the trunk, when he slid to the ground. I followed him, reaching the foot of the tree at almost the same moment. Without a word he hurried around the

side of the building to the front door, I after him. There, adjusting his flash light so the flame would remain fixed, he turned it on the door.

There is a certain instrument by which any door may be opened. It is, in fact, a very powerful lever which simply forces the lock out of position and crushes the door open. The door before us was of heavy wood, and though he fumbled a moment at the lock with a bit of steel, he had no success. Taking the lever from his pocket, he applied it in the proper manner and then began to use his strength. There came the sound of creaking wood, a splintering crash as the door gave way. And then, just as he started to push it open, there came a voice from a figure running over the lawn.

"Mr. Bartley," cried the voice.

We turned quickly as Patton came in the range of the flash light. He rushed to our side, much out of breath, and his questioning eyes swept over the two of us. Telling him to keep a little behind us, Bartley turned again to the door. He gave it a push, then a shove, and it swung open, ripped half off the hinges.

We found ourselves in a small entryway littered with rubbish of all kinds. In front of us was a partly opened door, and from the light which came through it I knew it led into the room which we had looked down upon. We took one step in the direction of the door and then paused suddenly as a voice came ringing out upon the silence:

"A sacrifice to the Most High," pealed the voice. And the tones were those of one carried away by some

stern purpose. They contained not only a note of cruelty, but also one of high resolution—the voice of one from whom sanity had long since departed.

“Blood—will—wash away all sin,” chanted the voice. The tone rose higher and higher until it was almost a shriek. “Blood—a sacrifice to the Most High—” Then as the voice sank, there came a silence and the half-sobbing refrain:

“The Lord chooses his servants to punish his enemies—Blood—”

With a leap Bartley reached the half-open door and flung it wide. I was in the room at almost the same moment, and there for a second we stood. Before us, the girl lay upon the sofa, and in the first quick glance I gave I saw that she still did not move. Before her stood the unkempt figure, his suit drenched by the rain, holding in the right hand the long knife.

As we burst into the room, the man’s voice died away in his throat; he whirled around and glared at us. His face was working convulsively, and the mouth was partly open, showing the long narrow teeth. The eyes glared at us in an unearthly manner, and his left hand opened and closed. He gave us one startled look—a look which contained nothing of recognition—and half gathered himself for a spring. And then suddenly there came a change in the expression of his face.

The eyes which had swept over Bartley and myself shifted their gaze to something which was behind us. As we looked, the wild expression which had glared at us began to fade away; instead there came a half-

bewildered look, the faint dawning of remembrance. Slowly I saw a look of astonishment give place to the greatest horror. He gave one step in our direction and pointed a wavering hand at the object behind us. I gave a quick look to see what it might be. But only Patton stood behind us in the doorway.

Advancing very slowly, one foot in front of the other, with the outstretched hands wavering, yet ever pointing, the man took two steps in our direction. He tried to speak, and I saw the lips move in a vain effort. Then as his face worked strangely, there burst forth the words in a half shriek:

"You—you. You were killed."

Bartley's voice broke in upon the silence, cool and sharp:

"No! You killed the wrong man."

The uncouth figure half stumbled, and there came a despairing moan from the trembling lips. The hand dropped limply to his side. He gave one wild, appealing look around the room, then his eyes came back to Patton. I saw the veins in his forehead swell, and his face flush a vivid red. He half started to gather himself for a leap in our direction—started, only to partly turn. There came a half groan from his lips—a despairing cry, and then suddenly he fell with a crash to the floor. Fell, to move his hands convulsively for a moment, and then become very still. Carter's next-door neighbor—the minister—lay dead at our feet.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CASE IS ENDED

SEVERAL hours later found us gathered in Carter's living room. It had been a very active two hours. Our first attention had been given to the secretary, for it needed but a glance to tell that the minister was beyond any aid of ours. We carried her to Carter's house, where his housekeeper placed her in bed, while we called the doctor. We had reached both the coroner and the chief of police, and when their duties had been completed, they had all gathered in Carter's house.

We were a somber-looking group of men. The horror and nervous tension of the last few hours was still with us. No one felt very much at ease, and my eyes still saw the amazing scene in the boat house. The heavy face of the chief wore the most bewildered look I have ever seen, and it seemed as if he still found it impossible to believe all that had taken place. Only Ranville and Bartley appeared to be unmoved, and the Englishman's face wore an admiring look whenever he glanced at Bartley.

It was the chief who voiced the thought which was in all our minds. He turned to Bartley, and his heavy voice asked the question we all wished answered.

"Mr. Bartley," he asked, "for God's sake, tell us how you doped out this thing. I can't believe yet the

minister killed those two men. To save my life I can't see it."

Bartley started to speak, only to be interrupted by Carter's rising from his chair. Telling us he thought the chief would pardon us if we took a little drink, he left the room, returning in a moment. Under his arm was a three-sided bottle, and glasses clinked in his pockets. No one spoke while he poured out the Scotch, and very soberly we each took our drink. Then Carter turned to his friend.

"Now, John," was all he said.

Fumbling in his pocket, Bartley found his cigar case and slowly lighted one of the long thin cigars he loved so well. Then, leaning far back in his chair, he turned to the chief.

"As you know, Chief," were his words, "the solving of any crime is oftentimes a matter of luck. It is not often we find clews scattered about which lead us directly to the criminal. Most murders are solved by very careful detail work by the police. Others are solved by sheer good fortune, and a few by what we might call a bit of psychology."

I saw Ranville nod his head in agreement, but the chief's face was a study. He started to say something, only to check himself as Bartley continued:

"When I first read in the papers regarding the murder of Warren, my first thought was, the whole thing seemed incredible. Then I began to wonder what the motive might be. There must always be some kind of a motive for a murder. The crime is committed, of course, for many reasons. In the main, there are but

three—robbery, revenge or sudden, frenzied passion. When I read the accounts of Warren's death, every one of these reasons seemed to be eliminated. In fact, the more I thought it over the less there seemed to be of any kind of motive."

He paused to relight his cigar; then went on:

"Of course, the murder of a man of Warren's prominence was startling enough in itself. As a rule, men of his type are not murdered. Then I began to wonder. There seemed on the face of it but one logical explanation. Could he have been killed because of something he might have done in China, by some enemies he might have made while there? When Carter told me of the visit made by the Chinaman, I began to wonder if he might be the killer. In the end I decided that he could not have been."

"I don't see how you have decided that," broke in the chief.

"Two things formed my opinion. The cross upon the forehead was the first one. A Chinaman might have killed him, but if he did, he would not have marked the body after death with a cross. Then came the story of the box. We found there was a box of opium in the library. Patton's information regarding the boxes given Warren in China checked up with the story the Chinaman told. But one box of opium was not enough for a crime of that type. The Chinaman could have secured the box at the time he was first in the library; that is, if he had not been forced to leave."

"To leave?" questioned Carter.

Bartley turned to his friend. "Carter, did you not think it rather queer that the Chinaman left the library as quickly as he did? He had discovered Warren was dead. To him that was of little account. But it seems that either he must have seen some one returning to the building or else heard some one near the room. One thing he could not afford to have happen: that was take any chance he would be accused of the murder. That's why he left."

I saw Ranville nod, and Bartley continued:

"Patton told us that Mr. Warren never had the time to examine the gift of three boxes which had been given him at the last moment. The Chinaman told the truth. He was but an odd coincident in the case, but it was sufficient for a short while to throw us all away from the real motive. Then when I heard your stories, I began to have a faint suspicion—"

"You did," interrupted Carter. "Of what?"

Bartley laughed. "A faint suspicion that perhaps you had not told me every single detail. As the affair stood, we were up against a stone wall. Warren had been killed—but there was no motive for the crime. Of course, that was absurd. I began to wonder if you had overlooked anything. And then I decided there was but one way I could see any light in this crime. It was to apply some modern psychology—try and discover the type of a man who would commit such an absurd murder. That is—it was to us, but to the murderer it was not. And then, all at once, you told me very clearly what type of a man I must look for."

"We did not," was Carter's quick comment.

"Do you remember that bit of paper you found near the body? That paper with the letters 'Anani'?"

We nodded.

"For some reason none of you tried to figure out what those letters might mean. They did mean something, though the word was not completed. Did you ever hear of 'Ananias'?"

As the chief wrinkled up his brow in thought, Ranville brought his hand down on his knee and laughed. It was Carter who spoke, his voice impatient as he said:

"Of course I did. He is in the Bible. Some sort of a liar who was struck dead."

"He is in the Bible, Carter," was Bartley's smiling reply. "But I am a little surprised you knew it. The gentleman, as you remember, was struck dead—by God—for telling a lie. You carry those letters to their logical conclusion, and the world would have spelled out 'Ananias.' Our psychology will tell us the murderer used that name instead of writing out another word, 'Liar.'"

"But, Mr. Bartley," broke in the chief, "of all damned foolishness that's the worst. No one could call Mr. Warren that sort of a name. He was one of the big men of the country. You are all wrong there."

"Wait a moment, Chief," was the calm reply. "You have made the reply the average man would make. And even if an ordinary man killed Mr. Warren and thought he lied, he would not have used the word 'Ananias' to express that fact. It gave me my first clew

to the type of man I wished to find. And there is something else you must remember—”

As we bent forward in our chairs, his eyes swept slowly over us. His voice was very grave when he spoke.

“Mr. Warren was one of the great men of our land—one of our greatest men of science. But you must remember that there are many millions of people in this country who would say that he was a ‘liar.’ Remember his statement when he came out of China? I have found the solution of the origin of man. The last proof of evolution has been discovered.”

His eyes swept over us, and as no one spoke, he went on:

“In every college in this world evolution is taught as the only logical explanation of the origin of man. Every intelligent person accepts it. You know, however, that in America to-day there is a great campaign against the subject. In fact, there is a campaign against science as being ‘ungodly.’ Take a rabid, bigoted man who is uneducated—one who sees in science an attack upon religion and the Bible—and you will find a man who would say Warren was what that word implied—a ‘liar.’”

Ranville’s face was very grave as his eyes rested upon Bartley. Without waiting for a reply, Bartley said very gravely:

“I have often wondered just how far you could carry on a campaign of hatred and untruths without reaping a fearful penalty. We have been breeding intolerance in America for years. All over our country,

in the south and in the west, men are at the present time carrying on a campaign against the teaching of science. They are inflaming the minds of simple people in what they call a great crusade. In the end you cannot breed intolerance and hatred without some time having to reap the full penalty. Warren paid the price of that campaign of misrepresentation. It has happened before. Intolerance—breeding hatred—and then in an unbalanced mind flaming out in violence.

“I began to wonder if perhaps I had not found the type who would commit such a crime, and also the motive. When you told me of the faint cross cut into the head of the dead man, I knew that we were dealing with an unbalanced mind.”

He paused and lighted a fresh cigar; then added:

“And the night the minister came here I began to wonder if he might be the man. This afternoon I was sure of it.”

At our questioning glances he informed us as to what had made him suspicious. He reminded us that the minister had broken out in a rather wild attack upon what he said was the fact that evolution was responsible for people not going to church. Then he added that when the clergyman had expressed his opinion that Warren’s discoveries could not be given to the world, he had been corrected by Carter’s statement that Mr. Warren’s assistant was coming to finish the book.

He remarked that only the fact he was suspicious of the man, perhaps caused him to notice the look which passed over his face when he made his statement

regarding Patton. It was a look of consternation and of hatred. From that moment he had begun to have his suspicions regarding the minister. One other thing convinced him they were true.

The chief had been following Bartley's story with the closest attention. In part, I believed that he was not sure Bartley's reasoning was correct. I could see the puzzled look sweep across his face, and once or twice he shook his head as if he did not agree. It was his voice which asked:

"What was the other thing?"

"Pelt and I were in the minister's study this afternoon. I made my call at a time I knew he was out. I had seen him go down the lake in his boat. There was nothing very much out of the way in his study—that is, on first glance. His books were mostly controversial theological works, and a good many of them were attacks upon evolution. But in a bookcase which had a glass door covered by cloth I found something else. To start with, the books in the case were a weird mixture. There were a great many books upon flagellation—the worst sort of books. Then there were a number dealing with the celebrated Girard case. That was a famous case of sadism under the guise of religion. Also there were the five pamphlets which covered the Lepworth school matter."

There came a short expression from Ranville. As the rest of us looked blankly at the two men, Bartley enlightened us.

"The Lepworth school affair is a very celebrated case in the realm of sexual psychology. The schoolmaster,

a young man named Wood, aroused England over sixty years ago by the brutal and cruel punishments he inflicted upon his pupils. He managed to escape to America. There is no doubt the man was sexually unbalanced. To-day we would call it a pathological condition. But standing on that shelf was a genealogy of the Woods family—that branch of it. And that schoolmaster, who had to flee England, was the grandfather of the minister.

“Now I do not know much about Woods. He was forced out of England and came to this country. He made money, we do know. But the fact he built this church tells a good deal. It was, no doubt, his gesture to the Almighty—his attempt to win forgiveness for the sins of the flesh. To-day we know another thing. Any textbook upon heredity will tell you that children inherit their qualities more from their grandparents than their parents. And here was the minister, and in his blood was that unbalanced make-up of the English schoolmaster. In his case it made him a bigot without friends and also whipped him into queer reform movements. It also explains the horrible books I found in his case. And I might add that I found the missing volumes of the De Sade.

“The genealogy told more. The minister’s father married a woman named Wright. After the minister was born she was placed in an insane asylum, where she died. You can see from the standpoint of heredity what took place. The sadistic strain in the blood of the grandfather mixed in the unbalanced blood of the woman—and the minister was the result. From such

a type you look for your odd reforms—your fantastic crimes.”

In the silence which followed there came the plaintive voice of the chief:

“But still I don’t understand why he killed Warren.”

“Well,” came Bartley’s voice, “let us start at the beginning. Here you have the minister. His heredity is very bad. His entire life, that is, the things he did, showed that he was a sad neurotic. He hated pleasure; he hated all things which normal people enjoy. In fact most of the wild, rabid fanatics are the same type. But with him there was a double danger.

“We know to-day that there is not much difference between the person who reacts violently in a sexual manner and the one who goes to a wild extreme in religious matters. Our psychology has proven they are alike, from hundreds of cases. You had here an unbalanced man. The anti-evolution group, of which he was a member, had read Warren’s statement—the last proof of evolution had been found. Now to him that would be absurd; and, at the same time, he would look upon Warren as an enemy of God.

“Let us suppose he brooded over the matter day after day. He might have even prayed that Warren would be found wrong. Then to add flame to his unbalanced thoughts came the news that Warren was to write his book in the very place where the minister lived. That did not improve matters. So one day he went to see Warren. I think I can picture what happened.”

“What?” came the chief’s eager voice.

"I think the minister went into Warren's library with the purpose of begging that he would not publish his book. In his unbalanced mind he would see nothing out of the way in such a request. You can picture what Warren must have said. It was like oil to a flame. As the minister looked at the scientist he would see him as the very enemy of society. Then, without a doubt, something snapped in his brain. He rose to say 'good-by' and suddenly stabbed him. In his first wild frenzy he thought of himself as doing the work of God. The cross was a symbol of that. And when he wrote the word 'Ananias,' the same thought was in his mind.

"Just what happened after that we do not know. His frenzy would not last long. Remember he was not technically insane—only unbalanced upon several things, with a warped mind. It is my opinion he went away and then returned later. Perhaps he remembered the door was open. Perhaps when he came to his right mind, he realized what he had done and went back to see if he left a clew. And then it was he who must have broken the bookcase to take those books—books he must have often heard of, but was unable to secure."

At that moment there came a voice from the doorway:

"May I come in?"

We turned to see the secretary. She was wearing a gay-colored dressing gown which must have belonged to Carter. Her face was rather pale, but otherwise she showed little signs of the experience she had been through. We rose to our feet, and Ranville found her

a chair. She dropped into it and smiled faintly as she turned to Carter:

"Did you telephone my aunt?" she asked anxiously.

Carter rose with a jump and said sheepishly that he had never thought of it. As he started for the door the girl stopped him, saying that no doubt the chief would be willing to take her home in a few moments. The chief agreed to this, but said he wanted to hear what had happened to her.

Her story was a very brief one. She had gone home to her supper and, when it was over, returned to the library. As she came up the steps of the building, to her great surprise, she heard a shot within. She rushed to the door and went a few feet within the room. To her consternation, the minister was near the desk and in his hand was a gun. He turned at her cry.

She gave a shudder at the recollection. His face was a vivid red, and his eyes blazed as he looked at her. She said that she thought he was crazy. With a weird cry, as she turned to run from the room, he made a dash after her. Just as his hand was about to fall upon her, she must have fainted, for she remembered no more until she came to in the boat house—alone.

Though she tried to open the two doors of the room, she discovered they were locked on the outside. She yelled as loud as she could, but the approaching storm and the high wind drowned her voice. And then when she thought it would be useless to cry out again, she heard the door open. A moment later the door leading into the room was swung aside, and the lights flashed on. Just what happened after that she did not know.

There was a short moment when, to her horror, she again saw the minister—saw him creep over the floor in her direction—and then she said she must have fainted again.

We said nothing, and then with an appealing look, which took us all in, the girl asked:

"I have just one faint recollection. As I fainted the last time, the minister was saying something about a sacrifice. What did he mean?"

It was Bartley who spoke, and his words were, of course, untrue:

"I think you must have been mistaken," was his short reply.

The girl shook her head as if in doubt, but settled back in her chair. In the silence there came the voice of the chief:

"How about the murder of the gardener?"

"That's more simple," was the answer. "You must, of course, understand, Chief, that when the minister realized what he had done, he was torn between two conflicting emotions. First, of course, was the thought that he had done a good deed—he had saved his God from blasphemy. That idea grew upon him. It did not, however, do away with the other feeling. After all, he had committed a murder, and he knew it. In the few days after the crime he must have been fast approaching actual insanity.

"Then there came a startling fact. He was told that Patton would complete the book—the book which would give the world Warren's discovery. He had killed a man to prevent that book being written, and

his crime was in vain. The world collapsed for him at the moment he realized that his crime had been useless."

"But he did not know Patton," barked out the chief.

"Yes, he did," replied Carter. "I introduced them this morning."

Bartley took up the thought. "Yes, he had met him. That's why he made his mistake. He knew the suit Patton was wearing. When he saw the back of the gardener as he turned to escape from the room, he thought it was Patton and shot him. In build, height and general appearance they were about the same."

"No doubt it's all so," retorted the chief, "but what I can't understand is this: What did the gardener see, what was it made him turn, as you say, to leave the library?"

"He must have seen the minister destroying the manuscript on the desk. He tried to get out of the room without being heard in order to tell Patton. And he was shot. As Miss Harlan screamed, the minister rushed at her. Her fainting no doubt saved her life. He took her down to the boat, then to the boat house. The rest you know. In that startled moment when the eyes of the murderer fell upon Patton, and he saw his victim standing before him, he realized he had killed the wrong man. His heart could not stand the strain."

"That was lucky for him," was the chief's dry comment. "But, at that, he was crazy."

"Yes—and—no," was Bartley's reply. "In the beginning he simply was a neurotic—unbalanced, not insane. In the end the conflict between his two selves

drove him insane. If you mean he was insane the last few hours of his life, I agree with you."

Silence fell, which the chief broke to say that he thought he better return to town. The secretary went up to her room to dress, returning in a few moments. At the door she turned to thank us, and then said good night. We stood for a moment in the open door and watched the car leave the drive; then went back into the house. As we moved rather nervously about the room, Carter paused and asked:

"John, what would that man have done to that girl if we had not reached the boat house?"

"Killed her. You remember his repeated cry—a sacrifice—a sacrifice. His mind was gone then. Upon his conscience, if he had any, were two murders. Dimly he wished to make his peace with God, and he remembered the idea which runs through so much theology—the sacrifice of blood. He would have killed her as an offering—the offering which his unbalanced mind thought was demanded."

The thought was a horrible one, and I gave a little shiver. As the men sank down into their chairs, there came a silence which no one broke. In it again I heard the weird tones of the organ as my mind went back to the moments I had spent in the church balcony. I shuddered as I thought of the frenzied voice of the minister with his wild cry for a sacrifice. And then my eyes fell upon Ranville.

He was sitting in a chair by the table. His face was very thoughtful, and once or twice I saw him knit his brows. As he lifted his head, our eyes met for a second.

Then his glance strayed over to the table. On its surface was the bottle of Scotch. His hand went forth, and he poured out a small drink. Holding the glass in his hand, he turned to Bartley:

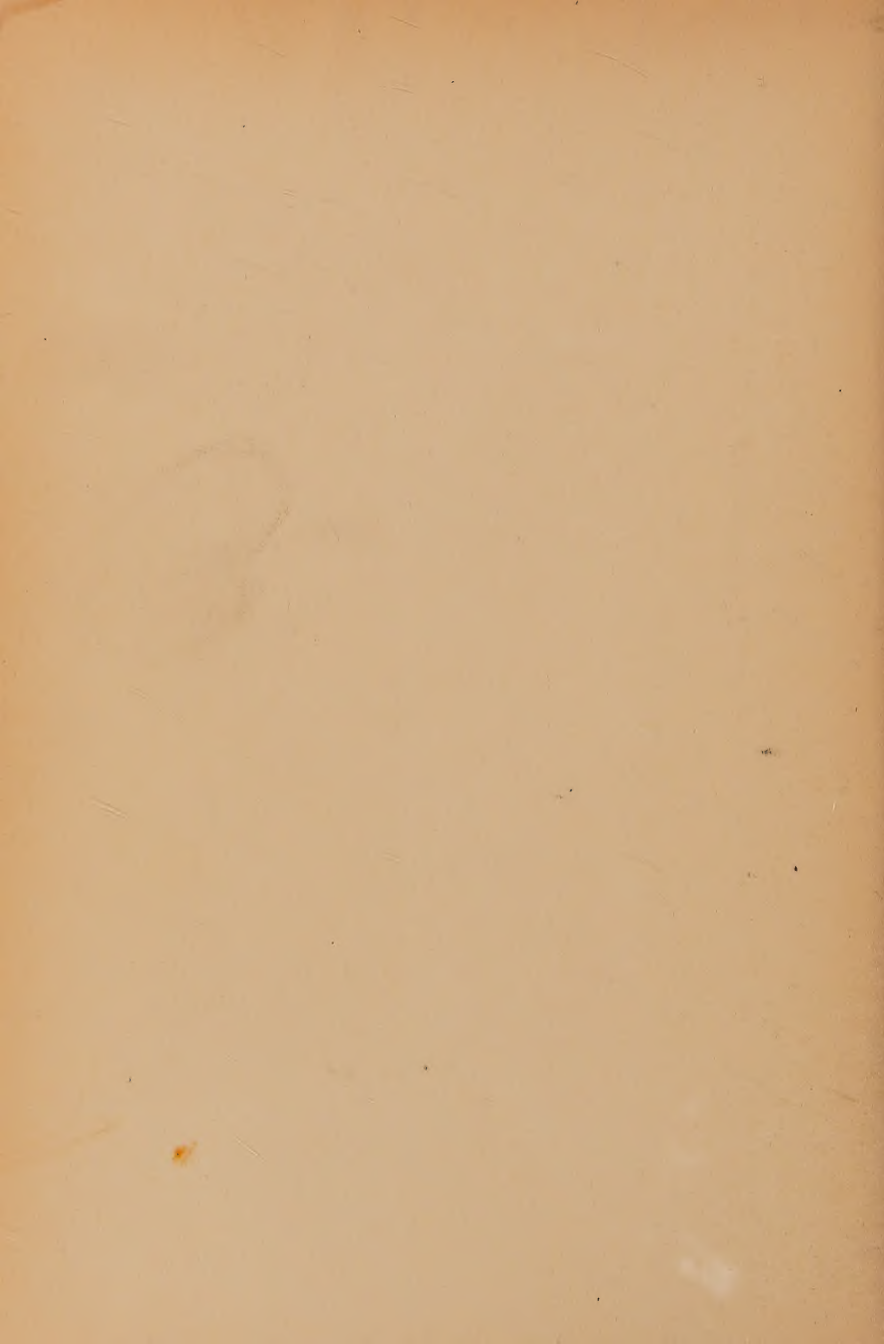
"Well, Mr. Bartley, you pulled it off. But there is one thing I wish to tell you."

We turned to look at the Englishman's face. There was a little twinkle in his eyes, and a smile played over his face. He raised his glass to his lips after a gesture in Bartley's direction. Then, as he drained it, he said, and there was a laughing note in his voice:

"You pulled it off. But do you know I think the Yard could have done the same thing?"

THE END

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